

Answers to Worldview Questions

A Catholic apologetics book written by P. Béla Bangha

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RELIGION

1.1 WHO TALKS ABOUT RELIGION TODAY? THE AGE OF RELIGION IS OVER AND HUMANITY IS MOVING TOWARDS NEW IDEAS.

This is what the enemies of religion have been saying for a few hundred or a thousand years, and religion is still here and alive, and is always gaining new momentum, often in places where it was thought to be almost buried. The reason for this is that religion is so serious a matter, and so deeply rooted in the very nature of man, that even if its voice is silenced for a time, it always reappears and claims its natural rights.

Religion always has been and always will be as long as man lives on earth. For every man, who is not blind and insane, must of necessity ask himself sooner or later the question: where does the world come from? Where does life go? And what is the reason, the purpose, the meaning of everything that happens? And as soon as man searches for these questions, he will find no serious answer to them except the one that leads to God and is the foundation of religion.

1.2 AN EDUCATED MAN CAN EXIST WITHOUT RELIGION.

If he forcibly silences the voice of reason within him that seeks the ultimate great questions, then man can indeed exist for a time without religion. This, however, is not a sign of education, but rather of intellectual poverty, of narrow-mindedness, of a lack of courage that often only arbitrarily narrows the intellectual orientation. History shows, however, that it is precisely the most cultured and profound minds that have sought solutions to questions of worldview, and most of them have found them in the Christian religion. No one, therefore, has the right to see in religion a lack of education.

On the contrary, it is suspicious that it is the semi-literate who, in contrast to religion, invoke their own great education. As few as there are not religious people among the truly educated, so frequent is the empty-headed boasting of unbelief among the shallowly educated or only one-sidedly educated (e.g. in technology), and most of all among the ranks of the completely uneducated screamers. In the majority of cases, irreligion is a sign of thoughtlessness, grandiloquence and intellectual adolescence.

1.3 RELIGION KILLS THE JOY OF LIFE.

It is true that religion does not allow the unbridled and unconscionable indulgence of our instincts. Religion puts a brake on our passions and sets limits to our excessive desires. But it also protects the most precious treasure of social coexistence: morality and mutual respect for rights.

Woe to human society if everyone could do as he pleased! If the thief were free to steal, if the tyrant were free to be cruel, if the clever and cunning were free to prey on his neighbour, if the higher in rank were free to abuse the subordinate position of others at will, if husband and wife were free to indulge their desires and trample on marital fidelity, if children were free to commit depravity and forget with impunity their duty of gratitude and respect to their parents. The unrestrained pursuit of the joys of life would only benefit embezzlers, robbers, and evildoers, not honest men.

There is, however, a particular joy of life: the joy of a good conscience, the peace of the love of God and love of men and the blessed security of the hope of eternal life, which, though not so noisy as the pleasures of sensuality, is a deeper, truer, more uplifting joy than all worldly delights. And religion is the true mother and bearer of this joy.

1.4 MODERN SCIENCE HAS OVERTHROWN RELIGION.

It used to be fashionable to talk that way; it is no longer. Science is now more modest, Indeed, which science would have overthrown religion? And which thesis of religion has it brought down? Point out specifically: where is that specific contradiction, and do not be content with idle talk! No thesis of the Catholic religion has ever yet been shown in the name of any science to be false and contrary to science. The reverse is true: every tenet of irreligion and unbelief is all scientific nonsense.

If there were indeed a contradiction between religion and science, it would have been noticed first of all by those

giants of intellect who could combine the most brilliant knowledge with the most childlike faith and piety, if such giants of intellect as Newton and Laplace, Volta and Ampère, Gauss and Cauchy, [...] and Gregor Mendel, Röntgen and Maxwell, found no contradiction between religion and science, what right have dwarfs, petty freethinking party secretaries and Bolshevik ignoramuses to cry out against religion in the name of science?

1.5 THE MAIN THING IS THAT EVERYONE SHOULD LIVE HONESTLY, RELIGION IS SECONDARY.

First of all; we need religion precisely so that everyone can be honest! Secondly: he who is not religious, that is, he who does not do his duty to God, already cannot be called honest. Is it important that everyone should be honest? Correct; let every man therefore do his duty. But all his duties, and above all his duties to God! For where men do not obey God, experience has shown that they do not observe the duties of honour and decency towards one another. Pope Pius XII rightly writes that wars, breaches of contracts, enmities and intemperance arise from the fact that he who does not bow before the law of God does not bow before any moral law.

1.6 AMONG THE RELIGIOUS THERE ARE THOSE WHO ARE WITHOUT CHARACTER AND EVEN EVIL-DOERS, BUT AMONG THE IRRELIGIOUS THERE ARE ALSO MEN OF CHARACTER.

It follows, at most, that there are exceptions everywhere. But everyone feels that someone is an exception if, being a religious man, he forgets himself to such an extent that his actions are not in accordance with the lofty ideals which arise from religion. And it is likewise a striking exception if a man is fastidiously attentive to the requirements of natural morality, but at the same time fails to notice that he is falling short in the highest and most natural duty; that of worshipping and serving God. The noblest men, the most shining examples of duty and conscientiousness, the most unselfish patriots and fathers of families, the noblest mothers and spouses, the most devoted children and the purest youth, have always been found to grow up on the soil of religious life, while the evildoers, the deceivers, the fornicators and thieves, the selfish, the unscrupulous trampers on others, are almost without exception among the irreligious. You only have to look around in life!

1.7 GOD DOES NOT NEED ME TO BOW DOWN TO HIM OUTWARDLY.

He does not “need” it, that is true, but you do need it, you do have an obligation. The king or prince or governor does not need you to pay him homage when you appear before him, yet he may require you to pay him homage, and to pay it in such form as he desires and the law requires.

It is not God who requires your outward show of respect, but reason and morality, honour and divine law, which require the obligatory expression of a sense of submission and obedience.

1.8 CHRISTIANITY DEGRADES HUMAN DIGNITY BECAUSE IT DEMANDS HUMILIATION, BOWING DOWN, SERVITUDE.

Humble and obedient submission to the Almighty God is indeed the elementary duty of all of us. But this duty does not humiliate or degrade us. On the contrary, that boastful pride, which does not even want to bow before its supreme Lord and Creator, but with childish defiance and imagination pretends to be its own God, as if it had given itself all that it has by the free grace of God, degrades much more. To bow before God the Creator is exalting; to serve God is to reign.

Besides, is it not strange that it is those who speak so highly of human dignity who are themselves slaves: slaves to their own petty, even base inclinations, and who bow to the ground before men, if it is about getting from them some small distinction or material advantage!

1.9 I AM RELIGIOUS, BUT I LIVE MY OWN RELIGION.

Why don't you add: I am a scientist, but I only follow the science of my own making! I love arithmetic, but I use my own multiplication table. I am rich, but I only have banknotes that I forged myself. I am a soldier, but I do not take orders from any officer, but I go and shoot and fight where and when it suits me. Religion is not a matter of individual pleasure. In determining what is the right religion, we are not the supreme judges, but God. The only right religion is that which follows, accepts, practices and lives according to what God has revealed and commanded. “My own” religion is only as good as a man wishing to only acknowledge laws created by himself against the state. This would be mere rebellion

and open denial of the nation.

[...]

1.10 RELIGION DOES NOT PREVENT SUFFERING, NOR DOES IT ERADICATE SIN FROM THE WORLD, NOR DOES IT ELIMINATE INJUSTICE AND OPPRESSION OF THE POOR.

Where religion is extinct from souls, it indeed cannot work miracles. The vast majority of human ills and sufferings are the result of sin, and therefore of the neglect of religion, e.g. most wars. If men were more religious, all of them, the leaders, the administrators of the destinies of states, there would certainly be less evil in the world, less injustice, less inequality, less unrest, less evil. All evils could not be eradicated from the earth, including, for example, most diseases and death. But that is not the task of religion. Religion ennobles suffering and gives the suffering person the spiritual strength to bear the inevitable pain calmly and trustingly in God; it sweetens even the most embarrassing humiliation and sickness, and even death.

It is precisely because it leaves man utterly without consolation and hope in the face of the problem of suffering, and especially of the dreadful necessity of death, that irreligion is the greatest curse.

1.11 IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE WHO FOLLOWS WHAT RELIGION!

This is basically like saying: it doesn't matter who follows what multiplication table!

Whoever says two by two is ten, or even nine hundred, is just as right as whoever says two by two is four.

Religion is not a fantasy, nor a game, but truth, and truth cannot be contrary to itself. Only that religion is true, therefore, which contains only what God has revealed and commanded. Any religion which differs in any respect from this is an erroneous religion, either because it does not accept all that God has revealed or commands, or because it teaches as a divine revelation what God has not revealed. It is not true, therefore, that it makes no difference who follows what religion!

1.12 EVERY RELIGION SAYS THAT IT IS RIGHT; HOW CAN I BE SURE WHICH ONE IS RIGHT?

We concede that it often takes a great deal of study for the individual man to find the essential difference between false and erroneous religions and the true religion. The upbringing, the environment, the prejudices picked up without criticism often make it very difficult to find one's way. But it is objectively impossible that God could have made true religion so unrecognizable and not have given it such distinguishing marks by which it can be recognized as such and distinguished from error.

And indeed, whoever seriously investigates, whoever studies the Catholic religion and other religions without partiality, will come to the recognition of the one true Church with almost infallible certainty. What these distinguishing marks are will be discussed below.

1.13 WE WORSHIP ONE GOD; NO MATTER WHAT CHURCH WE GO TO.

Truly, it does not follow from the fact that we worship one God that it does not matter how we worship Him or what we regard as His revelation and command. Jews and Muslims worship one God, but it may not be the same whether I am a Jew, a Muslim or a Christian. It is likewise not the same whether, as a Christian, I serve and worship God within the framework of the Catholic religion, which is fully authentic and based on the divine will, or within a framework which is more or less contrary to God's decrees.

1.14 IS EVERYONE DAMNED THEN AND ONLY CATHOLICS SAVED?

Again, this does not follow from the above. For it is one thing whether a religion is in itself true and alone right, and another whether there may not be some men who, though objectively wrong, are wrong through no fault of their own, and so their error does not count morally. He who does not cling to an erroneous religion out of negligence, contempt, or obstinacy, but is the victim of a bona fide error, does not thereby commit a sin, and is not damned for it.

1.15 LET EVERY MAN, THEREFORE, REMAIN IN THE FAITH INTO WHICH HE WAS BORN.

Again, this does not follow from the above. On the contrary, it is the most sacred duty of every man to seek the truth, the revelation and will of God, that is, the true religion, to the best of his ability, and when he has found it, to follow it through all obstacles. But if through no fault of his own he remains in error, he does not sin. If, on the other hand, he has recognized the truth and does not follow it, he sins grievously, and for this he may be damned.

1.16 ARE NOT “HEAVEN” AND “HELL” CHILDISH EXPRESSIONS?

If God says that there is eternal happiness and eternal punishment, which we shall shortly call heaven and hell, then it is not only possible to believe in them, but necessary to believe in them. Indeed, it is the only serious course of action to believe in them.

Even if I do not see it, there can be something and there is. For I cannot see my mind, and presumably there is one. The afterlife, by the way, will be discussed below.

God

2.1 IS IT CERTAIN THAT THERE IS A GOD?

If there is logic on earth, if there is reason and rational thought, if there is anything that we call reason, law of thought, legitimate inference, then there is a God, and if there is a God, then his existence is more certain than any other certainty in the world.

It is more natural that there is a God than that there are finite, created beings, for the essence of God is existence, without which He is inconceivable; whereas non-existence is as conceivable as existence in finite beings. God necessarily exists; for other things it is a mystery whether they exist and why they exist.

2.2 GOD IS IDENTICAL WITH THE WORLD; THIS IS MODERN MONISM.

This is an old idea of pantheism, and it is not a new and modern invention. Is God identical with the world, and therefore also with the horse, the ox, the donkey? With hay, with straw? With hydrogen and oxygen? Atoms and molecules? Would all these things together give us the infinite meaning, whose splendid creations we encounter in the universe? But, to emphasize just one thing, this world is not one thing, but a thousand million times a thousand million different things, an immense mass of innumerable molecules, atoms and atomic parts! This mass cannot be God, because it is not a unified being, it does not think and will together, it cannot be a unified world planner and world designer. For this reason alone it cannot be the ultimate basis of the amazing unity of the world order. And if all molecules obey a supreme natural law, then the question returns: who created this great, common natural law? Who thought it up and who wrote it into the nature of all the molecules in an immensely dizzying number?

2.3 CAN THE EXISTENCE OF GOD BE PROVED BY REASON ALONE? WITHOUT SCRIPTURE AND REVELATION?

Of course! We must only logically and consistently apply the principle of sufficient foundation and causality to the greatest facts of the universe and life. True, the so-called philosophical arguments that follow here are for philosophically trained minds only; others are more likely to be captivated by arguments taken from the physical world (see p. 48 ff.).

1. The existence of God is proved above all by the fact of existence itself. The whole vast realm of existence trumpets the existence of God. That there are things, a whole world even, whose existence is contingent, whose existence has nothing to do with its definition. Which, therefore, might never have existed. The situation could have been such that it never existed.

There is no reason why this or that speck, this or that blade of grass or leaf, grain of sand or even man should necessarily exist; why the laws of being and thinking should be shaken if this mosquito had never come into the world, or even if our solar system had never been formed. It depends on small things, and there could be a million more or fewer mosquitoes in the world.

How is it that these things, whose existence is not in their essence exist? In billions and billions? Things whose existence is not a logical necessity? Things that could just as well be non-existent nothingness? Here, someone, some supreme power, has decided whether or not these things should exist at all, whether or not the world should come into being and develop! This is a logical necessity. For nothing can be without a sufficient basis; and here existence itself is such that it is no sufficient basis in itself!

This deeply philosophical argument is perhaps not understood immediately by everyone. For to grasp it fully requires a certain depth of thought and discipline. But whoever is able to enter into this train of thought will find in this one argument the most incontrovertible proof of the existence of God.

2. The existence of God is further proved by the intrinsic essential imperfection of things. The fact that one thing is "this" and another "that" means that one thing represents one degree, kind, or shade of being and the other one another degree, kind, or shade of being. But neither represents the whole of being, the perfection of being. Neither of them can say of itself: I am being itself; I exist because I am a being so absolutely perfect in every direction that my perfection cannot even be lacking in actual and necessary existence. No, one thing embodies only this, the other only that tiny

fraction of being. Now, if someone or something does not possess these or those qualities by virtue of its being, who has determined for it what and how much of the perfection of being it should receive and represent? That the one should be this, the other that? That the one should be spirit, the other matter; and if matter, whether living or inanimate? And if living, shall it be plant, animal, man? And if an animal, is it a unicellular organism, or an insect, or a reptile, or a bird, or a mammal? If a plant, whether grass, or grain, or bush, or tree? And what kind of tree?

Each is what its immediate ancestor was, the root from which it sprang; this is true; but it does not solve the question, it only kicks it down the road. Who made there be so many degrees, so many kinds, so wide a range of being in the world at all? If you say chance, you have gone off the path of logical reasoning, because there is no chance. The determiner of the degrees of existence, the dispenser of the vast treasury of existence, can only be a wise and powerful Infinite Being: the Creator.

3. Even this is not all. In this world, things are subject to continuous, regular changes and developments. They pass from one state of perfection to another; they assume the form of one existence and lose that of another. Every movement, every growth, every development, every action, every word and thought is change. But if all things in this world are changing, then all things are necessarily finite and created. Why? Because the uncreated, the infinite being can never change in anything: for it always has everything equally, infinitely and perfectly. Otherwise it would not be an infinite being. That which is of itself is always and necessarily as it is: eternally the same and equally infinitely perfect.

If nature would exist of itself, then the order of nature would also be of itself and unchangeable, for it would belong to the essence of things. But it is not unchangeable, for man can change it a thousand times, though in small ways. So this world is not of itself, but refers to an infinite Being above it.

4. The existence of God is further proved by the diversity of things. That which is a being of itself cannot be many but only one, but in this unity it is absolutely great and perfect. Finite beings are diverse precisely because they are all finite, none of them exhausting the totality of existence. If the world were identical with God, it could consist only of a single atom, or more correctly: not of a single atom but of a single divine being, because the atom itself already means matter, and therefore complexity and spatiality, and thus confinement and imperfection.

Who can say this, when he looks around him and sees the staggering diversity of beings, the millions of heavenly bodies, the many millions of living or inanimate beings on each of them, and in a single grain of dust the infinite multiplicity of atoms, and even within the same atom the billions of electrons, protons and neutrons?

Pantheism is the greatest impossibility precisely because it takes as one what is obviously many; which is not only not one, but an uncountable, immense, maddeningly manifold colourfulness.

2.4 THESE ARE ALL PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENTS. BUT CAN THE EXISTENCE OF GOD BE PROVEN ON THE BASIS OF NATURAL SCIENCE?

Yes, and again in several ways.

We have already referred to the amazing order of the world. Where does this order come from? It cannot be mere coincidence that two or three hydrogen molecules follow exactly the same physical and chemical laws. Still less can it be mere coincidence that as many hydrogen molecules as there are in the world and in the universe - unspeakable, unimaginable numbers - all obey exactly the same laws, without exception! In the Sun and in Sirius, in the drop of water and in the whole Milky Way, everywhere! Not one of them is exempt from the rule, from the order of a higher, really working, inviolable command and law!

Who made it so that there is a natural law in the world, and even an infinite chain of natural laws? Who has made it so that all beings, whether living or inanimate, whether terrestrial or celestial, must follow this order and obey these natural laws?

Did this order evolve of its own accord? Such a supposition would be the greatest crucifixion, mockery, and throwing into the thrashcan of human reason! "By itself" would mean "by chance". By chance, that is to say, on a null basis! By chance, not even ten pebbles align in a row, let alone thousands of billions times thousands of billions of pebbles and

mountains and suns and atoms and molecules! Where there is an arrangement on such an immense scale, to deny the reason behind the arrangement is to deny reason itself, to give up thinking altogether. [...]

2.5 YES, YES, BUT ARRANGING IS NOT THE SAME AS CREATING! A WATCHMAKER ALSO ARRANGES THE PARTS OF THE MOVEMENT, BUT HE DOES NOT CREATE THE WATCH.

Correct, the arrangement itself is not necessarily a creation. It is true that even if God were not the creator of the world, but only the arranger, He would already be such a terribly powerful lord that we should bow to the ground before him. He who “arranges” solar systems and milky ways must be a very powerful engineer and arranger after all! But this is not so. The arrangement we have witnessed a thousand times in the universe is not only external. It does not only consist in, for example, the movement, speed or direction of movement of the heavenly bodies, which are all incidental and external to the nature of the heavenly bodies.

In reality, most of the ordering laws of nature concern and determine the innermost essence of things themselves, and then the arranger of necessity is at the same time the essence-giver of things, and therefore their creator! The fact, for example, that we human beings think and will, that we have a spiritual life and cultural, scientific, mediating, aesthetic, etc. instincts: this is not merely an external arrangement, but an inner formation, a determination of our being, an essential determination, and therefore a creation. He who has written these spiritual instincts, these laws, into our essence, can only be the creator of our spirit itself!

God, therefore, is not only the arranger, but also, indeed, the creator.

2.6 THE WORLD HAS NECESSARILY EVOLVED FROM THE INTERNAL LAWS OF MATTER.

What is “necessarily”? Where there is “necessity”, there is already some internal law; but where there is a law, there must be a lawgiver: there someone has planned and formed the internal forces and faculties according to which the evolution of matter proceeds. Now, who was this planner, this lawgiver, this organizer, this harmonizer, this wise and powerful initiator of these forces and faculties, if not God? To create a world capable of development, and to endow it with powers capable of development, is a still greater masterpiece than to create a world that never changes, a world that is ready-made.

2.7 THE WORLD AND ITS ORDER WERE CREATED BY THE FORCES OF NATURE.

It is as if someone were to say: the watch was not made by a watchmaker, but by the forces of the watch; the springs, the wheels and the hands. Napoleon’s battles were not fought by Napoleon, but by the laws of war. The “forces of nature” are only carrying out what a higher intelligence and will have planned and invested in them. The forces of nature act blindly: gravity, attraction, electricity, magnetism, etc. But we are not talking here of forces acting blindly, but of the wonderful order, the purposefulness, the thousand-millionfold harmony, the assembly, the interlocking of these forces, which cannot be explained by reference to mere natural forces. It is not the gravel, the lime and the bricks that build the house, but the architect who designs it and the master builder who builds it.

If this is already evident in a small human work, how much more so in the wonderful, thousand-secret order and purposefulness of creation!

2.8 THE ORDER OF THE WORLD, ACCORDING TO DARWIN, EVOLVED IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE FITTEST AND STRONGEST OF THE MANY CLUSTERS OF ELEMENTS AND PRIMITIVE FORMATIONS ALWAYS SURVIVED, AND THE REST PERISHED.

This Darwinian idea is worthless, because it really explains nothing; there is no longer any doubt among serious scientists today. For this whole idea is a clever evasion of the manifestly absurd idea that the most wonderful and diverse order could have come into being by sheer chance.

The human body, with its millions of wonders, the eyes, ears, brain, heart, lungs, stomach, blood vessels and blood, the unimaginably delicate and amazing web of muscles and nerves, which science has still only managed to discover in very small parts and imperfectly: all of which could have been formed “by chance”, by the irrational and unplanned confluence of elements? And likewise the billions of wonders of the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms,

the precisely calculated paths, movements, forces, temperatures of the ocean of stars and the terrifyingly mysterious mysteries of the atoms? The wondrous laws, the harmonies, the millionfold aesthetics and expediency of spiritual, moral and social life?

But let us suppose for a moment the impossibility that the elements and primitive formations could indeed, by sheer accident of moving around and of combination, have produced such wonderful, higher beings. Then there are two further questions, first: why is it that only the more perfect, the more expedient, always survives? It is not the case that, where development is left to chance, the better always prevails and the bad, being weak, perishes. On the contrary, the weeds, the imperfect, very often overwhelm the better. - Second question: where have all those half- or one-tenth successful, useless and doomed to destruction, transitional forms gone? We can't find a trace of them anywhere in the world! Not even among the geological remains and paleological layers of the millennia gone by! Because if they had been destroyed, we should certainly be able to find the remains of their parts, skeletons and decayed remains in all kinds of places, and in enormous numbers. For there should be infinitely more transitional forms than finished and perfect ones. For even if I roll a hundred dice: a thousand, ten thousand times as many other combinations result other than the one I want. How many thousands, how many tens of millions of times should a blind child without the use of reason draw all sorts of sketches on a sheet of paper until at last, "by chance", a great portrait emerges from his attempts? Thus, in the prehistoric layers of the earth, we should find many millions of transitional forms, e.g. half-man, half-ape, man at the top, ape at the bottom, half-eyed, half-armed freaks, plant, animal or human figures and organs that are a quarter, tenth or ten thousandth part as successful, as many as those that are successful. But this isn't happening anywhere. Transitional forms, half-successful accidental attempts, are nowhere to be found in nature.

It is amazing how desperate and absurd the assumptions of those who want at all costs to escape from the most natural and most obvious, nay, the only natural and the only obvious solution: God!

Darwin was right to establish the fact of development in nature; but not even he himself did not establish an unlimited and lawless evolution. The truly verifiable development in nature has definite laws and is always initiated by definite forces and possibilities, and these require a planner, a wise and intelligent creator.

2.9 MANY THINGS, FOR EXAMPLE IN THE VAST REALM OF THE STARS, SERVE NO PURPOSE! IS THAT ORDER AS WELL?

There is still a great order among the stars, even if we cannot say what purpose this order serves. Even if we do not know exactly what the stars are for, they are of service to us in that they bear witness to the Creator's great riches and power in a most moving way. When one delves into the mysteries of the starry wonders, one is almost dizzy with the immense power and grandeur that is revealed in creation.

2.10 AT LEAST THE FORMATION OF LIVING BEINGS COULD HAVE TAKEN PLACE BY MERE EVOLUTION, WITHOUT THE INTERVENTION OF A CREATOR.

At the most, one might say, without direct creative intervention. But God is still necessary, otherwise neither living nor inanimate matter could have come into existence. However, a living being has never yet evolved from an inanimate being under any circumstances. Nor will it ever evolve, for in the living there is a higher principle of life of which inanimate things are utterly devoid. [...]

2.11 NATURAL SCIENCE HAS SHOWN THAT HIGHER FORMS ARE CONSTANTLY EVOLVING FROM LOWER FORMS.

Where the innate ability and power to do so is there, that is, where the seeds of development were laid in the individual organism from the beginning, there yes, but not elsewhere and in other directions. Evolution is possible only within a very narrow framework, and natural science knows of no case where, for example, a reptile has evolved into a mammal, or an animal into a human, as the materialist fairy-tale tellers who exaggerate Darwinism claim.

2.12 NATURAL SCIENCE SHOWS THAT HUMANS ARE DESCENDED FROM APES. THE RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN APES AND MAN IS STILL STRIKING TODAY.

This descent has not yet been demonstrated by any natural science. Natural resemblance does not yet imply descent from one another. God willed that, because we indeed belong to the animal kingdom in body, we should have

much the same physique as animals; but this does not mean that we are descended from animals, but only that our bodies belong to the animal kingdom. There is only a taxonomic and morphological or physical similarity between man and ape, but no genealogical relationship (relationship pertaining to descent). Since man has nipples as well, must we say that man was originally a woman? Similarity is not the same as descent from each other!

2.13 THERE ARE ALSO ANOMALIES IN THE WORLD THAT ARE RATHER EVIDENCE AGAINST GOD THAN FOR HIM.

Wrong! There are no anomalies, only phenomena, the actual further purpose of which we humans do not yet know. Such are the tonsils or the appendix in the human organism; such are certain insects, reptiles, and wild animals in nature. "What are they for?", asks the short-sighted man, and does not consider that there are many things which may have a very important role in the universe, without our scanty human knowledge being able to discover at once what that role is.

Besides, the so-called anomalies are so rare, compared to the order we can grasp, that to infer from them against the existence of God would be like someone saying: the cathedral in Cologne was not built by master builders because a tiny niche in one of the towers is out of proportion with the rest of the building! Or as if one were to say: in the "Run of Zalán" [a Hungarian work of literature], in some places, the six-foot lines of verse are replaced by seven-foot lines of verse: the whole poem is therefore not a poetic work, but an accidental, meaningless scribble.

2.14 WHY DID GOD CREATE THE WORLD IF HE DID NOT NEED IT?

Indeed, God did not create the world because he needed it. But because out of overflowing love he wanted to share his eternal and infinite happiness with others. Therefore he created intelligent beings; the rest he created to serve intelligent beings.

2.15 FAITH SEEKS TO EXPLAIN EVERYTHING BY A MIRACLE, BUT SCIENCE KNOWS NO MIRACLES.

Big mistake! It would be the greatest miracle if one could explain the universe without creation. No science has ever been able to do that. It is not creation that is the miracle, but the world itself is one gigantic miracle, for which creation is the most natural, indeed the only natural and acceptable explanation.

2.16 IF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD IS SO CLEAR, HOW IS IT THAT MANY MEN DO NOT BELIEVE IN HIM?

In most cases, unbelief is not of the mind but of the heart; men do not want to believe because belief has uncomfortable consequences and establishes strict moral commandments, and so many people avoid the obvious nature of the basic tenets of faith. Not only clear evildoers and reprobates, but often also men of otherwise refined minds and scientifically educated men. Why? Because they, too, are afraid of the obligatory consequences of the faith in God: the duties of submission, humility, and service to God. Or because they are so completely immersed in worldly things: science, politics, acquisition of wealth, entertainment, that they are so to speak "too busy" to deal with God and religion.

2.17 DO WE HAVE OTHER KINDS OF ARGUMENTS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE?

[...]

The existence of God is further proved by the spiritual life of man. Man has not only a body, which lives and breeds, and not only senses, which are capable of certain sensual perception, but also a soul, a spirituality. It has a soul which, in its own particular activity, is internally independent of space, of matter and its limitations. For man not only sees, hears, and touches, like the animal, but also thinks and wills: he creates and analyses concepts, creates abstract ideas, deduces, calculates, invents, ponders, searches for reasons, judges, and creates intellectual masterpieces. And on the level of will, in many cases he freely chooses between good and evil, between virtue and vice, between love and hate, between enthusiasm and condemnation, and above all: he feels in himself the voices and reproaches of his conscience. He feels the moral law within himself, the same as all men have felt since the world began.

Where does all this come from? From matter, spirit cannot evolve, the same way as a living being cannot evolve from an inanimate being without creative intervention. Here only a proper Creative Being can explain the facts.

2.18 LIFE AND THOUGHT ARE SIMPLY THE RESULT OF NATURAL EVOLUTION.

Let us suppose that it is; for all life and all thought develops to a certain extent. But it never develops from nothing, nor from an essentially lower order of being. Development can never be accidental, for there is no chance in nature, but all development always takes place on the basis of certain antecedent forces and according to certain laws of development embedded in things.

That is to say: even so, there must be a Creator, more so than without the law of development. For it requires a far greater creative work for things to develop themselves according to the forces and laws of development embedded in them by the Creator than for them to appear in existence at once in an unchanging completeness.

2.19 IF THE SOUL COULD BEGIN, IT COULD END, THAT IS TO SAY: IT IS NOT NECESSARILY IMMORTAL.

This is a very wrong conclusion. The soul could have begun, indeed it must have begun, otherwise it could not exist today. On the other hand, once it exists, there is no reason for God to end its existence, as we have seen above. Therefore, the fact that something began does not necessarily mean that it must end. Life and existence are not a sausage and not a piece of cloth, so that we must necessarily imagine them as having two ends.

2.20 THEN WHY DO WE SAY THAT THE MATERIAL WORLD WILL END?

It is because there may be a reasonable reason for the material world to cease to exist; namely, on the one hand, that once all energy is transformed into heat and evenly distributed in space, there will be nothing to move matter; on the other hand, that the material world, in its present form, may no longer be needed. Whether or not God will continue to maintain the material world in some form after the final consummation, we humans have no idea at this time. But what may happen to matter cannot be a rule for the events of spiritual beings.

2.21 PERHAPS WE HAVE ARGUMENTS FOR GOD APART FROM THESE?

There are the so-called moral arguments for God, namely the argument for God derived from the natural moral law. Every human being has within him the knowledge of the difference between moral right and wrong, and the conviction that this law is binding regardless of any human law, benefit, or harm. This moral law and its binding force can only derive from the fact that the Creator of the moral order has already instilled the moral law into the souls of all of us in creation. Neither this law, nor the common agreement of mankind that this law can only be the work of a supreme Being in us, can be explained otherwise than by God the Creator.

2.22 IF GOD IS GOOD, WHY DOES HE INFLICT SO MUCH SUFFERING AND PAIN ON HIS CHILDREN?

This is undoubtedly a big and difficult question. But it is answered by the principle that suffering has great moral powers. It cleanses, ennobles, disappoints from the world, warns us of our own weakness, our own fallibility and the greatness of God, makes us serious and examine ourselves, makes us aware of the horror of eternal suffering to which he who forgets God exposes himself, and finally gives us an opportunity to atone for our sins.

2.23 WHAT HAVE I SINNED THAT GOD SHOULD PUNISH ME?

First of all, it is clear from the above that suffering has the character not only of punishment, but also of education and exaltation. Secondly, very few men can say of themselves that they do not have to atone to the sovereignty of the God who was offended. That some men imagine themselves to be perfectly innocent is usually only due to the fact that they have very much dulled their own conscience, and perhaps do not even regard grave sins as a serious matter. "What have I sinned?" he asks with great presumption, and does not remember that he may have neglected his religious duties in many cases, insulted and injured his neighbor in his honor, given occasion to others to sin, or sinned grievously in thought, word, deed against the 6th commandment, etc. And then he is talking about "what has he sinned?"

2.24 IF GOD IS JUST, WHY DOES HE OFTEN ALLOW THE INNOCENT AND GOOD TO SUFFER AND THE WICKED TO RULE?

Because God does not want to do ultimate justice among men on this earth, but in the next life. He allows the good to suffer precisely because they gain merits for eternal life, just as Christ Himself, the best and most innocent, also

suffered at the hands of the wicked and died in terrible pains on the cross for men. But He often allows the wicked to enjoy the pleasure of their sins, because they can expect more terrible and unimaginable sufferings than any human horror in the next life anyway. God is eternal; He has time to do justice: to exalt and glorify the innocent, and to humble and destroy the wicked.

2.25 HOW CAN THERE BE A GOD IN HEAVEN IF HE CAN TOLERATE WITHOUT A WORD THE BLATANT INJUSTICES, MURDERS, BLASPHEMIES THAT GO ON DAY AFTER DAY?

We have already answered this question above. Besides, we can also answer this: God often allows the apparent triumph of evil on earth precisely because He wants to give his followers the opportunity to exercise the highest degree of heroism, to stand their ground as martyrs and confessors of the faith, and thus to follow Christ our Lord perfectly. Let us not forget that the Lord Jesus, the Virgin Mary and the apostles all suffered and were apparently defeated by the wicked. Who can say that their suffering and humiliation did not represent a superior and great triumph?

To the good, the cross and Calvary are the way of resurrection!

MAN

3.1 IT IS SAID THAT ONLY MAN HAS A SOUL; BUT ANIMALS AND EVEN PLANTS HAVE SOULS.

It is true, and therefore more correct to say: only man has a rational or spiritual soul. But the animal or vegetative soul is rather called the vegetative or animal life principle.

3.2 THE ANIMAL ALSO HAS A RATIONAL SOUL, A MIND, AND WE HAVE SEEN THIS A HUNDRED TIMES.

The animal has no mind, no rational soul. Some people are misled by the fact that in animals one can sometimes observe wonderfully purposeful ways of acting. But all this can be explained by the accuracy of sensory perception, and especially by instinct, and yet all the evidence points to the fact that the animal has no independent reason. The animal cannot help itself even when it needs only a very small inference and inventiveness, which is not given by instinct and the faculty of sensory cognition. If animals had reason, they would not fall into the same traps, for example, for thousands of years.

3.3 ANIMAL AND HUMAN REASON DIFFER ONLY IN DEGREE.

Not in degree, but essentially. The animal can never go beyond the limits imposed on it by its limited sensual cognition and instinct. Namely, it never forms abstract concepts, never deduces, never cultivates science and art: not even in the slightest degree. This is not a difference of degree, but of essence.

3.4 MAN ALSO ACTS BY INSTINCT, SO IS HE THEN AN ANIMAL?

Man acts instinctively in many things, and in this respect he is in the same class as the animal, with which he has much in common in his physical constitution. But man does not merely and exclusively act according to his instinct, but in many cases according to his reason, and for this reason he is called a rational being.

3.5 WHAT IS THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A RATIONAL AND AN IRRATIONAL BEING?

It is that the rational being is engaged in intellectual pursuits which are not bounded by the limitations of matter and therefore cannot be explained by simple sensual cognition. Thus, man thinks in the strict sense of the word, that is to say: he conceives concepts, even abstract and universal concepts, he makes judgments, draws conclusions, analyses and summarizes, pursues science and cultivates art, invents, calculates, creates masterpieces, recognizes the difference between moral good and evil. In addition, man is free to choose, to decide, to exert his will, to love unselfishly and in a self-sacrificing manner. All this cannot be explained by mere material forms and feelings, but requires in man a life principle whose activity transcends the activity that is strictly spatial and limited by matter. But where there is a supramaterial activity, there must also be a supramaterial principle of life, and this supramaterial principle of life is called the spiritual soul. One would look in vain for the above-mentioned activities in an animal.

3.6 ACCORDING TO MANY PSYCHOLOGISTS OF TODAY, THE SOUL IS NOT A PERMANENT, SEPARATE PRINCIPLE OF LIFE, BUT SIMPLY A SET OF SO-CALLED SPIRITUAL FACTS (WUNDT AND OTHERS).

In this, however, these psychologists are decidedly mistaken. For self-consciousness asserts that there are not only spiritual facts in me (thinking, determination, love, anger, etc.), but that there is a certain and constant bearer of these spiritual facts: the self, which remains the same among the changing spiritual facts from childhood to death. I was the one who at the age of 7 thought this or that, at 15 I did this or that sinful or virtuous act, and today I think about this or that question. Spiritual facts come and go, the self and its conscious bearer: the soul remains.

3.7 THE SOUL IS NOTHING MORE THAN A CERTAIN SUBTLER STATE OF THE BODY ORGANISM.

It follows precisely from the above that the soul is a more noble thing than matter and a spiritual thing, and therefore cannot be identical with any material substance, however subtle. Indeed, self-consciousness testifies that our "self" always remains the same. According to modern natural science, the cellular make-up of our body is renewed every few years, taking in completely different substances; yet we feel very well that "we" are the same as we were 10-20-50

years ago; we feel all the deeds, merits or sins of our childhood and youth as our own, whereas if our soul were only a substance, nothing would remain constant in us for 10-20-50 years.

3.8 MAN IS GIVEN EXISTENCE BY HIS PARENTS, SO THE SOUL IS ALSO CREATED BY PROCREATION.

The soul comes into being at procreation, but not by procreation. Material processes cannot produce a spiritual product, that is, a product that is essentially superior to matter. The soul is always created directly by God, but at the moment when the material component capable of being animated, the fertilized ovum, is created by procreation.

3.9 IS IT NOT STRANGE THAT GOD MAKES THE CREATION OF THE SOUL DEPENDENT ON THE PROCESS OF PROCREATION?

There is nothing strange in this, if He has so willed and ordained. The soul takes possession of the body when the body is fit for that. And this becoming fit is by God's appointment through the process of procreation.

3.10 WHY IS THE HUMAN SOUL IMMORTAL, WHILE THE ANIMAL AND PLANT SOUL IS NOT?

Because man has a spiritual soul, that is to say, a soul which is above matter and internally independent of it. So there is no reason why it should be destroyed by separation from the body, as is the case with animals and plants.

3.11 WHAT HAPPENS TO THE SOUL AT THE MOMENT OF DEATH?

When it ceases to be united with the body, it takes up an independent existence; it continues to think and will, to rejoice or suffer, but now it is independent of the body, of the senses, of earthly feelings.

3.12 IS THIS POSSIBLE?

There is nothing impossible about it. Even at the time of its union with the body, the soul was the actual factor of the life of thought and will, and therefore the more important and superior part of our being human; so there is nothing impossible in the fact that this soul, even after separation from the body, cannot continue its spiritual activity, its separate life.

3.13 SO WOULD THERE BE AN AFTERLIFE FOR THE SOUL EVEN IF THERE WERE NEVER A BODILY RESURRECTION?

Of course. We know of bodily resurrection only by revelation, whereas the soul's survival after death can be attested independently of revelation. And indeed, on this basis the pagans believed in the survival and life of the soul beyond the grave. It is well known that all somewhat cultured peoples have a belief in the afterlife. [...]

3.14 IF GOD WANTS OUR SALVATION IN THE AFTERLIFE, WHY DOES HE GIVE US SO MANY TEMPTATIONS? WHY THEN IS FAITH AND A PURE LIFE SO DIFFICULT?

Because God does not want to just drop salvation into our laps as a gift to a beggar, but wants us to work hard for it through His grace. He who considers what it means to gain eternal and infinite happiness in the next life, cannot consider any moral struggle, sacrifice, or care in life too high a price to pay.

3.15 BUT THIS WAY, MANY ARE DAMNED. HOW CAN GOD BE GOOD IF HE CAN CAST HIS CHILDREN INTO ETERNAL FIRE?

The punishment of eternal fire is indeed the most shocking, the most serious doctrine of all religion, and can only be understood if we bear in mind the following:

1. God is not only infinitely merciful, but also infinitely holy and just, so He must hate sin infinitely and punish it if it is committed.

2. God does not compel any man to be damned, but gives to every man sufficient power of grace to overcome temptations, to make atonement for sins which he may have committed through contrition, to obtain his grace again, and so to be saved. God does not force anyone to sin, as Calvin taught, but wants to lead everyone to the knowledge

of the truth and to salvation. (1 Tim. 2,4) Therefore, whosoever is be damned, shall be damned through his own fault.

3.16 THERE ARE THE HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF PAGANS WHO DO NOT EVEN KNOW THE TRUE FAITH. ARE THEY ALL DAMNED?

No way! Only those of the pagans will go to hell who have remained outside the true faith due to their own fault, and who have sinned grievously against the natural moral law and have never repented of it properly.

It is natural that this happens much more easily among pagans than among Christians, and we must do our utmost to bring all pagans to the fold of Christ as soon as possible. God desires the salvation of all (1 Tim. 2,4). [...]

3.17 WHY DID GOD AT LEAST NOT CREATE THOSE WHOM HE FOREKNEW WOULD BE DAMNED?

Because in his determination of creation he could not be led by those who knowingly became his enemies; he could not reward the wicked by not creating them out of unmerited mercy. He created men, and left it to men whether they want to be saved or not. Let him who then chooses damnation look on himself and not on God.

3.18 THE AFTERLIFE IS A BEAUTIFUL DREAM, BUT IS IT TRUE?

Why should it be a dream and why not a reality? Can only only this narrow little world, in which move around in this life, exist? It is a strange idea that only what is within our tiny earthly horizons can be true.

The afterlife is real, for it is impossible for a wise and just God to create spiritual beings, such as man is due to his soul, and then destroy them by the death of the body without any cause or need. Then why did He create him? Why did He shine up in front of them the hope of everlasting, eternal and true happiness? Why then does He allow injustice to prevail and honour to suffer on earth? And what kind of God would create His children only to destroy them when they have gone through all the trials of life, without any need? If there is a true God, a wise God, a good God - and there is - then the afterlife, the survival of the human soul after death, is as certain as there is a God in heaven.

But what we rightly infer from the attributes of God is placed into a hundredfold new light by the revelations of Christ. Christ has taught eternal life, and he cannot fail to burn into men's souls the doctrine, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world (on this earth), but lose his soul?" He amply describes the last judgment at which He, as the Judge of the world, will decide the eternal destiny of every man: the righteous he will bring to "everlasting life" and the unrepentant sinners he will cast into "everlasting fire".

He who does not consider Christ a liar must believe in the world to come and in eternal life.

3.19 HOW DO PRIESTS KNOW WHAT IS IN THE AFTERLIFE? HAVE THEY BEEN THERE? HAVE THEY SEEN IT?

No, they themselves have not been there. You've never been to New Zealand, yet you believe it exists. The priests didn't see the afterlife directly. Nor do they speak from their own knowledge or experience when they talk about the afterlife. But from the statements of someone who has "been there", who knows very well what lies there.

The afterlife was spoken of by Christ Himself, so clearly and emphatically that anyone who believes in Him, that is, anyone who is a serious Christian, must accept the Catholic Church's teaching on the afterlife, which is in perfect agreement with Christ's teaching.

3.20 I BELIEVE IN THE TRANSMIGRATION OF SOULS.

Then you believe in something for which there is not the slightest evidence, for which you find not the slightest basis in reason or revelation. Only certain primitive pagan peoples believe in the transmigration of souls, those who believe that man comes into the world first as a monkey, a cat, a horse, a donkey, and then as this or that man, and then as another man. It is all logical nonsense. An intelligent being cannot come into the world as an animal, and this or that person cannot exist as another person: for then he or she would no longer be that person.

Besides, this naïve myth is in open contradiction with revelation, because according to the word of God, man receives in the life to come his eternal reward or punishment on the basis of this life, and therefore does not live another

life on earth afterwards!

REVELATION

4.1 IT IS ENOUGH TO BELIEVE IN A PERSONAL, OMNIPOTENT GOD, THE CREATOR OF THE WORLD. BELIEF IN REVELATION AND RELIGIONS WITH DOCTRINES IS SUPERFLUOUS.

It depends on whether revelation from God has really taken place and can be recognized as such after due investigation. If it is, then it is the most serious obligation for everyone to believe in it and to follow the particular religion (not "religions") which duly preserves and proclaims these revelations. No one can say to the State either: "I recognize the State, but I do not care for its laws or its demands!"

4.2 WHO KNOWS WHAT IS TRUE FROM THE THINGS THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT CREATION, THE FIRST HUMAN COUPLE, PARADISE, THE FALL, THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND THE PROMISES OF THE SAVIOR? HOW CAN THINGS THAT HAPPENED MILLENNIA AGO BE ESTABLISHED WITH ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY TODAY?

There is evidence for this, too, which cannot even be summarized in a few words, but which the interested reader will find in abundance in any handbook on apologetics. We will emphasize only one point here: without the sacred writings of the Old Testament, it is impossible to understand the history of the Jewish people, its very particular religious development.

In particular, it is impossible to understand how a relatively small and insignificant nation, which by nature was also inclined to the idolatrous customs of the sea of people flowing around it, could have survived for one and a half thousand years on the basis of a pure faith in God and very high moral and religious ideals, such as are not to be found among any ancient people, not even among the highly cultured Greeks and Romans. This cannot be explained by any natural development, but solely by the fact that the Jewish people, in spite of all their faults and fallibility, felt the revelations, commands, and promises of God hovering almost over them; the revelations which God addressed to them through the patriarchs and prophets, and which they partly wrote down.

4.3 HOW DO I KNOW THAT THE GOSPELS ARE RELIABLE HISTORICAL SOURCES?

First of all, it is a historical certainty that the Gospels do indeed come from the contemporaries of Christ. This was denied for a long time by the German unbelieving Bible scholarship, but the conclusive power of the facts forced one of their main leaders, Adolf Harnack himself, to retreat. The life, words and deeds of Jesus were conducted in full public view, and if the evangelists had not faithfully conveyed them, contemporaries would certainly have protested vehemently. The great respect with which contemporaries received these Gospels without controversy elevates the statements in the Gospels from the level of mere individual statements to the universal witness of a whole people, and even of a great, world-wide movement.

Moreover, the narrative of the evangelists itself bears the inimitable stamp of honesty and truthfulness, so much so that it excludes any conscious or unconscious distortion. The Gospel authors observed closely and knew the events they were describing; they had ample opportunity to verify every detail by direct testimony. That they deliberately intended to be untruthful is ruled out by the consideration that it could not possibly have been in their interest, for they could not have derived any benefit from the Gospel narratives, on the contrary, they had only suffered much persecution from the Gentiles and the Pharisaic Jews. Three of the four evangelists were martyred for what they wrote, but so were hundreds and thousands of others who gave their lives and blood for the truth of the Gospels, for the doctrines and events they presented.

If there is any document whose authenticity and historical reliability is beyond doubt, it is the Gospel.

4.4 THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE GOSPELS WERE INDEED WRITTEN IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE LIFE OF JESUS. IT IS PROBABLE THAT THEY WERE PUBLISHED ONLY A FEW HUNDRED YEARS LATER AND ARE THEREFORE FULL OF FABLES, MYTHOLOGICAL EMBELLISHMENTS AND EXAGGERATIONS.

This is how the "enlightened" spoke a hundred years ago, and even half a century ago Renan and his followers. Today, no serious person subscribes to this premise. The first two centuries of Christianity provide such a mass of

written testimony to the early origin of the Gospels that it is no longer possible to doubt it. Harnack himself, one of the most respected leaders of modern scriptural scholarship, is forced to admit that the Gospels and the other books of the New Testament do indeed date from the period in which Catholic tradition places them, the 1st century.

4.5 THE AUTHORS OF THE GOSPELS OBVIOUSLY WANT TO GLORIFY THE FIGURE OF JESUS WITH LEGENDARY DETAILS; THESE LEGENDARY DETAILS MUST THEREFORE BE EXCISED FROM THE GOSPELS.

There are no such things as legendary details in the Gospels, unless someone, out of prejudice and bias, declares everything that is beyond the ordinary and quite supernatural to be legendary in the first place. The birth and life of Jesus, his death and resurrection, are indeed full of miraculous events which are almost self-evident if the main character of the Gospels, Jesus, is indeed the Son of God. These miraculous phenomena cannot simply be brushed aside and declared to be fairy tales on a whim. If these miracles had been untrue, Jesus' contemporaries and direct witnesses of the events would not have accepted the Gospels as true historical records, and even as God's inspiration, but would have protested against them and turned their backs on them. And there is no trace of this in the history and literature of all Christian antiquity.

4.6 THE GOSPEL AUTHORS WERE GULLIBLE AND NAIVE PEOPLE, AND THAT IS WHY THEY WERE CAUGHT UP IN THE MIRACULOUS DETAILS.

These miraculous details either really happened or they didn't. If they had not happened, the Gospel writers would have been common charlatans and deceivers, and it is then inexplicable that they should have taken so much danger, persecution and even death upon themselves for the sake of their lies. But it would also be incomprehensible that the thousands who had seen and observed Jesus' life with their own eyes would have taken these nonsense and fibs so deadly seriously. And if these miracles did indeed take place, then their accurate and faithful recording is neither credulity nor naivety, but factual truth.

4.7 THE SCRIPTURES ARE FULL OF MIRACLES, AND MIRACLES ARE IN CONFLICT WITH NATURAL SCIENCE.

A miracle transcends natural science, but does not "get into conflict" with it. No science can claim that the omnipotent God who created all of nature cannot, once in a while, for some very important reason, e.g., for the purpose of obviously validating a revelation, do something that goes beyond the normal course of nature. For example, to heal the sick suddenly through his saints, or even to raise the dead, to calm a storm with a single word, or to multiply the loaves of bread. If one believes in an omnipotent God, one cannot doubt the miraculous power of God.

4.8 THE GOSPELS GIVE DIFFERENT ACCOUNTS OF CERTAIN EVENTS. HOW THEN CAN THEY BE BOOKS WRITTEN DUE TO INSPIRATION?

The gospels differ from one another, it is true, but they never contradict one another. The difference is rather that one emphasizes this or that circumstance more than the other; one gives a longer, the other a shorter account of the words of Christ. It is precisely these apparent contradictions which rather prove that the Gospels were indeed written on the basis of total sincerity and directness, not of collusion.

4.9 HOW DO I KNOW THAT THE ORIGINAL GOSPELS HAVE COME DOWN TO US UNCHANGED FOR ALL THESE CENTURIES?

Because from the very beginning, these sacred texts have been preserved with the utmost respect by Christians, just as sacred texts were by the Jews of the Old Testament, copied with religious piety and handed down from generation to generation. The copiers sometimes missed a word or a letter, but since they copied and transmitted the documents in many places at once, it was easy to spot and correct the errors. The 5000 or so surviving ancient manuscripts do indeed contain thousands of minor variations (textual discrepancies), but they are almost always completely insignificant; in essence they all agree. [...]

4.10 ST PAUL'S LETTERS ALREADY SHOW A VAST DEVELOPMENT COMPARED TO THE GOSPELS, ESPECIALLY TO THE GOSPEL OF MARK, PERHAPS THE EARLIEST OF THEM. THIS WOULD SEEM TO IMPLY THAT THE ORIGINAL TEACHINGS OF JESUS HAD ALREADY UNDERGONE SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES AT THE BEGINNING. CHRISTIANITY IS NOT FOUNDED BY JESUS, BUT RATHER BY THE APOSTLE PAUL.

St. Paul, with his marvelous profundity, is indeed a giant step towards the systematization and theological elaboration of the doctrines of the Gospel. He is the first theologian and systematizer of Christianity, the first inventor of certain later theological terms. But it is out of the question that he is the true founder of Christianity, for there is not a single line or letter in his writings that is not in its essence already found in the Gospels and in the statements of Jesus. To systematize is not to invent. St. Paul's role in relation to the Gospels is like that of a botanist in relation to the plant kingdom. By systematizing the wonders of the plant world, the botanist does not create or modify it; he is only its presenter, its explainer, its scientist, but he cannot be said to be the creator of the plant world.

4.11 IF THE RELIGION OF CHRIST IS TRUE, WHY HAS HE NOT BEEN ABLE TO CONQUER THE WORLD TO THIS DAY?

Christ Himself said that His kingdom would be like a mustard seed, which starts from the smallest beginnings and slowly grows into a tree that overshadows the whole world. This is exactly what history shows us: Christianity is growing. Today, on every continent, in every country, on every island, more than 700 million people profess to be its adherents, a good third of humanity.

The fact that the faith of Jesus has not yet conquered the whole world is not due to the inadequacy of Christianity, but to the omissions and inadequacies of men. For just as Christ himself had enemies and haters, so Christianity has always had and continues to have fierce opponents who do everything in their power to hinder the triumph of Christ's faith and his Church. In this endeavor they find powerful help in the blind and sinful nature of men themselves.

4.12 CHRISTIANITY DEMANDS THAT WE SHOULD GIVE THE OTHER SIDE OF OUR FACE TO THE ONE WHO SLAPS US IN THE FACE. THIS MAY BE THE RELIGION OF COWARDS AND LACKEYS, BUT NOT OF SELF-RESPECTING PEOPLE WITH A SPINE.

Christianity demands humility and bowing before God and his commands, ordinances, revelations; it demands respect for lawful rulers, parents, ecclesiastical and secular authorities, patience and generosity even in persecution; but it does not demand servile bowing before those who do not deserve it. Christian humility is neither servility nor being a lackey.

On the contrary, the masculine profession and practice of Christianity today often requires a high degree of self-respect and courage. Much more than the spirit that is ashamed to bow before God, but humbles itself to the ground, crawling before some earthly authorities: party leaders, political dictators, business bosses, from whom it can expect something in the way of money and promotion. Interesting inconsistency! These people take it for granted that when one kneels down before an actress with a made up face, a beautiful woman, one is not ashamed to kiss her hand, but is aroused and speaks angry words when one sees faithful Catholics kissing the hands of the Pope, the bishops, their spiritual father, in whom they respect the vicar of Christ.

4.13 IN REALITY, HOWEVER, NO ONE GIVES THE OTHER CHEEK TO THE ONE WHO SLAPS HIM IN THE FACE!

No, indeed, and that is because this admonition of our Lord Christ is obviously not a literal command, but a statement of principle, expressing the great truth that it is better to bear individual shame or injury in peace, even if it is repeated, than to pay for evil with evil, and thus open the way to hatred and eternal rivalry.

How much happier humanity would have been down the centuries if this principle had been followed! How many wars, massacres, family quarrels, hatreds and social rivalries could have been prevented if men had learned to be forgiving and patient rather than to get into an immediate quarrel and engage in endless quarrels and wars!

4.14 THE MORALITY OF CHRISTIANITY IS INFERIOR BECAUSE IT TEACHES US TO DO GOOD FOR REWARD AND TO AVOID EVIL FOR FEAR OF PUNISHMENT. KANT TEACHES US TO DO GOOD FOR ITS OWN SAKE!

Christianity does not teach us to do good and avoid evil only for the sake of reward and punishment. If someone talks like this, he misunderstands Christianity. Christian morality teaches that we do good primarily out of love for God and that we avoid evil because it is sin and offends God. But the motives of reward and punishment are also necessary, because pure love of God and abstract love of virtue would in practice have a sufficiently decisive and moving effect on very few people. Is it also a low thing to accept state or military honours?

The two are not mutually exclusive but complementary. It is better to rely on the motives of reward and fear, too, than to fall completely behind in the moral struggle! Is it immoral for parents and the state to reward or punish? Besides, reward and punishment in the afterlife are also supernatural motives connected with God, which cannot be equated with the motive of selfishness; here again, the love of God is the highest degree of reward, and the loss of God is the punishment: this is the noblest motive.

And Kant's categorical imperative, which seeks to cultivate virtue for the sake of abstract virtue, lacks a sufficient basis and thus hangs in the air and has no effect on serious men. No one does good because it is called good, unless there is a real higher law behind the word, a divine will, and what necessarily goes with it: reward and punishment.

CHRIST

5.1 IS IT CERTAIN THAT JESUS LIVED?

You might as well ask; is it certain that Julius Caesar or Saint Francis of Assisi lived? There are so many contemporary historical memories and records of Jesus, not only in the Gospels and the Christian writers of the earliest times, but also in Jewish and pagan writers (Josephus Flavius, Suetonius, Tacitus, Pliny), and so great are the historical events connected with his person and influence, that it is impossible to doubt his existence, as the half-mad German Kalthof did. Not only is the existence of Jesus certain, but many of the main facts of His life, many details of His teachings and His actions can be read with historical certainty from the surviving authentic records, and more than that, from the enormous living movement which these events, teachings and actions immediately triggered in the surrounding world and which, in unbroken succession, is maintained as a living reality to this day.

5.2 JESUS WAS AN EXCELLENT MAN, A WISE TEACHER, A GOODHEARTED FRIEND OF HUMANITY, BUT HE WAS NOT GOD.

The answer is simple. Then He was the wisest and purest, and He would have lied? For He did, indeed, constantly call Himself God: The only begotten Son of God, one with and of equal dignity with the Father, eternal almighty, the judge of the world. "I and the Father are one." (John 10:30) He constantly equates Himself with the Father ("Father, Son, Holy Spirit"), though as a man He calls Himself less than the Father.

At the Last Supper, in response to the Apostle Philip's request to show him the Father, Jesus replied emphatically: "Have I been so long a time with you; and have you not known me? Philip, he that seeth me seeth the Father also." (John 14:9). The Jews once wanted to stone him specifically for calling himself God: "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." (John 10:33) To the high priest's solemn demand that he should say whether he was the Son of God, Jesus answered with the most emphatic "yes", and when the high priest and the whole Jewish Sanhedrin became scandalized and branded it as blasphemy, Jesus did not retract his statement with a single word. He also accepted the solemn homage of Thomas, "My Lord, and my God" (John 20:28), though he could not have left these words unchallenged if he did not know himself to be truly God. He also solemnly declares himself to be the hearer of petitions to the Father, (John 14:13) He declares Himself to have been before Abraham, (John 8:58) and to have lived with the Father before the world was. (John 17:5) He forgives sins against God by His own authority, and declares that He will one day be the judge of the whole world.

Whoever speaks of himself in this way can only be God, or else a common fraudster, or perhaps a complete madman, but Jesus was not mad, but the wisest man and most brilliant thinker in the history of the world. Still less was he a swindler and a deceiver, because his pure moral character excluded the slightest sin, let alone such a capital crime of blasphemy and self-idolatry!

If Jesus proclaimed Himself God and let people worship Him as God, there can be only one explanation: that He was truly God.

The same is confirmed by the wonderful fulfillment of the Old Testament messianic prophecies in the person of Jesus; by the truly divine splendour of His teaching and moral excellence, far surpassing all humanity; by the many miracles he performed in broad daylight before the eyes of the masses, and observed by his enemies, especially his own resurrection; the astonishing vitality of his creation and of his Church, which, through two thousand years of storms, attacks, persecutions and spiritual changes, has remained unchanged and has become the starting-point of a new moral culture of radiant purity.

[...]

5.3 JESUS HIMSELF NEVER CALLS HIMSELF GOD, ONLY THE SON OF GOD.

The two are not mutually exclusive; St. John himself says at the beginning of his Gospel, "the Word was with God." But he also adds, "and the Word was God." (John 1:1) Jesus is the Son of God, because He is one of the three divine persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The word "Son of God", especially as Jesus repeatedly uses it, the only begotten

Son of God, is, from the above, even more than the simple word “God”, which might be misunderstood and explained in terms of pagan polytheism.

5.4 THE GOSPEL ITSELF TELLS US THAT JESUS BEGAN HIS PUBLIC CAREER IN THE MIDST OF DOUBTS AND TEMPTATIONS.

The Gospel does not speak of doubts, only of external temptations, which Jesus undertook for our edification, to give us an example of how to fight against temptations. It is precisely the supreme calm and certainty with which He responds to the words of the tempter that proves that Jesus was fully aware of His divinity from the beginning.

5.5 DID NOT JESUS HIMSELF SAY, “THE FATHER IS GREATER THAN I” [JOHN 14:28]?

Of course he said this, for He was necessarily less than the Father as a man. The “I” on His lips could mean the Godhead as well as the Manhood. As God, He was equal to the Father, and even one with him in the one Godhead; but as man, he was obviously less than the Father.

5.6 THAT JESUS CALLED HIMSELF THE SON OF GOD DOES NOT MEAN THAT HE WAS TRULY GOD; FOR WE ARE ALSO SONS OF GOD.

There are three senses in which one can be a “son of God”. In the broadest sense, every human being is a child of God, that is, born of God’s creative providence. In a narrower sense, divine sonship is the possession of supernatural grace, the supernatural rebirth in God that comes when God no longer regards us as His servants but as his adopted sons. And in the strictest sense, “Son of God” is the second divine person, who, in some way that is not immediately clear to us, is eternally “born” of the Father, proceeds, comes from, flows out of; but in such a way that one thing, one essence, one God remains with him. That Jesus was the Son of God in this latter sense has been shown above. This divine sonship is expressed in Scripture as “only begotten Son”, whereas we men can only be adopted sons of God, children of God in a figurative sense. Jesus himself feels a very different relationship with the Father than we do; he never says, for example: “our Father” but in this way: “my Father and your Father”. He is the “only begotten Son”, who is “in the bosom of the Father”. (John 1:18)

5.7 HOW CAN A MAN BE GOD?

Only by the divine person assuming a human nature as well, being clothed in human flesh and soul; but, of course, He also remains who he was from eternity; God, the only-begotten, eternal, divine Son of the Father. This dual nature is expressed by the word “God-man”, or in other words, “Word made flesh”.

5.8 HOW COULD FINITUDE BE UNITED IN JESUS WITH INFINITY, HUMAN WEAKNESS WITH DIVINE PERFECTION?

It would only be a contradiction if in Jesus the divine and human qualities were fused into one nature, and thus mutually diminished. But this is not the case. On the contrary, Jesus remained both fully God and fully man. In His humanity He was small and weak, but in His divinity He was infinite and omnipotent. In His humanity He became like us in all respects except sin, but in His divinity He is far above us. In his humanity he was born, grew, learned, tired, hungered, thirsted, wept, sweated, suffered, died, rose again; in His divinity He was eternal unchangeableness. All this did not cause any contradiction or division in Him, but, on the contrary, wonderfully complemented each other.

5.9 JESUS HIMSELF SAYS THAT EVEN HE, THE SON OF MAN, DOES NOT KNOW THE DAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT, ONLY THE FATHER.

That is correct: because in His humanity He could not know it. But He knew it as God, and of course, under the illuminating influence of His divinity, He knew it as man, but not on the basis of His human knowledge.

5.10 HOW COULD JESUS “PRAY” TO THE FATHER, IF HE HIMSELF WAS IDENTICAL IN HIS ESSENCE WITH THE FATHER?

As a man He could pray to himself as God; that is, His human soul could glorify the Godhead closely united to him, but totally different in essence. There is no contradiction in this, indeed it is a natural consequence of the two natures.

5.11 THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY IS NOTHING BUT A DISGUISED POLYTHEISM.

[...] Polytheism is completely excluded by the fundamental doctrine of Christianity, that the Trinity refers only to the divine persons, not to the one divine essence; that is, God is only one. The plurality of persons can in no way be opposed to the unity of essence, even if it is true that without revelation we would have no idea that “personhood” and “essence” do not always coincide. The fact that in our human beings the two coincide does not imply that they are conceptually the same thing.

5.12 IT IS STILL A CONTRADICTION: GOD IS ONE AND GOD IS THREE.

It would be a contradiction if we were to say: one essence and yet three essences; one person and yet three persons. But: one essence and three persons is not a contradiction, any more than it is a contradiction to say: three men and one family, or one hundred soldiers and one company. We do not identify the three with the one, but the three divine persons with the one God. No conceptual contradiction can be detected in this.

5.13 THE FIRST CHRISTIANS WERE VERY CREDULOUS.

The first Christians were not mindless enthusiasts and hysterics to defy the whole of the prevailing pagan and Jewish public life for the sake of a mere nothing, a legend, to assume the strict obligations of Christian morality, to renounce all the pleasures of life and to go en masse to martyrdom. It is not the Gospel story of Jesus Christ that is myth and legend, but rather those know-it-all, anti-religious theories and legends that would like to force the most striking, central phenomena of world history, which shine like the sun, into the narrow confines of their own everyday life.

5.14 THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF THE SAVIOUR IS A TYPICAL MYTH FOUND IN 20-30 OTHER MYTHOLOGIES.

This thesis would be difficult to prove. Even if the virgin birth is indeed mentioned in one or two mythologies, this only proves that pagan religious belief already considered the virgin birth to be a very honourable and noble idea. The only difference is that pagan mythologies are naïve tales without any real content, whereas the fact of the virgin birth of Christ is a historically proven reality (cf. Mt 1:20; Lk 1:35; etc.).

We are aware of many ancient pagan parallels of the Jesus-legends. Jesus is the Persian sun-god, Mary is the Egyptian goddess Astarte, the three divine persons are Brahman Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva; and the Virgin Mother is the Egyptian Isis, the virgin mother of Horus.

Every single statement is a complete error. Jesus has nothing to do with the Persian sun god, maybe if we count that the Church itself likes to call Jesus the “Sun of Truth” in poetic metaphors, nor can Mary be called to be similar to the Egyptian Astarte in any form. Because, first of all, Astarte never existed, and Mary is a historical person. The legend of Astarte is full of moral filth, of immodesty, which is the exact opposite of the historical image of the Virgin Mary of the Gospels. Finally, the Virgin Mary has never been considered by Christianity as a goddess, but only as the most pure handmaid of God, and so the comparison with Astarte fails utterly on this point too.

As far as the three divine persons and the three divine figures of Brahmanism are concerned, there is no similarity other than a mere numerical similarity.

The mention of the legend of Isis is also an ignorant misrepresentation, because according to ancient Egyptian legends, Isis was not a virgin parent at all, but an ordinary goddess and mother, like thousands of others in pagan mythology.

5.15 IS THERE A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JESUS AND, FOR EXAMPLE, SOCRATES, PLATO, ARISTOTLE AND OTHER GREAT WISE MEN?

Yes, there are essential differences, and they are many and profound. The pagan philosophers only recognized and expounded the natural theology and natural moral law, but even that imperfectly and often with grave errors, while Jesus proclaimed perfect and infallible divine truths. The teachings of the pagan wise men were entirely concerned with the worldly improvement of human life, whereas the teachings of Jesus are aimed at the attainment of eternal salvation. [...]

5.16 IT WAS NOT UNTIL JESUS WAS BAPTIZED IN THE JORDAN THAT HE WAS OVERCOME BY THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF HIS MESSIANIC VOCATION.

The miraculous revelation of heaven at His baptism in the Jordan was nothing new to Jesus, and was not for Jesus' sake, but for the sake of men, that they might believe in him. (Mt 3:17) Jesus knew Himself not only as Messiah, but also as God, from the very beginning.

5.17 WHAT WE KNOW OF JESUS' LIFE WITH HISTORICAL CERTAINTY DOES NOT GO BEYOND THE NATURAL. WE MUST REGARD MIRACLES AS MERE ADDITIONS.

It is a desperate effort to try to explain the life and miracles of Jesus in a natural way. Jesus' personality is itself such a miracle that can in no way be said to be natural. To say that the miracles in the life of Jesus are mere additions, as the so-called Tübingen school of the last century tried to make us believe, is as audacious as to claim that in the life of Napoleon, the battles and victories won are simple additions. It is not enough to claim such a thing, but it must be proven, and so far no serious attempt has been made to prove it.

5.18 THE ALLEGED RESURRECTION OF JESUS, TOO, WAS SURELY THE RESULT OF MASS HYPNOSIS.

Such mass hypnosis and mass suggestion is unknown in the whole field of science. Suggestion can produce dreamlike, confused and illogical imaginations, but even then not exactly equally and identically in a crowd with many people, especially if this crowd is composed of doubting, sane and healthy individuals. It is, however, quite impossible for a whole series of people to suggest to themselves a whole long series of statements and actions with profound logical and moral content in the same way and in complete agreement by sheer imagination.

At the resurrection and appearance of Jesus, the disciples all saw, heard, felt the same things, received the same teachings, measures, ordinances, admonitions, and instructions of infinite wisdom, divine revelations. Would all of them have seen and heard all this by mere sick imagination? [...]

5.19 IT IS SUSPICIOUS THAT ONLY JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN WITNESSES SPEAK OF JESUS AND HIS ALLEGED RESURRECTION.

Big mistake! It is true that Jesus lived and died in a remote and insignificant corner of the Roman world empire, being part of a nation of no interest to the arrogant Roman world. Yet the personality of Jesus was so deeply engraved in the minds of his contemporaries that Roman pagan literature was compelled to take note of him and to speak of him repeatedly. Thus, Suetonius briefly mentions Christ in his biography of the emperor Claudius; Tacitus records that Pontius Pilate condemned him to death; Phlegon, a freedman [freed slave] of the emperor Hadrian, records that the sun was darkened at the time of Jesus' death; Celsus, the pagan philosopher, writes at length about Jesus and attacks his doctrine, but in no way challenges the well-known, outstanding events of his life; and Pliny the Younger writes formally to the emperor about the Christians and their doctrines concerning Christ. Josephus Flavius, the Roman historian of Jewish origin (born c. 37 AD), also repeatedly mentions Christ.

5.20 JESUS STILL HAS MANY ENEMIES TODAY.

Of course! Not only the Son of God, but everyone who makes such high moral demands on people as He does, has many enemies. To all the servants of pride, of self-admiration, of immorality, to all the prisoners of irreligion and denial of God, Jesus is certainly unpopular. The enemies of Jesus are all those who live in sin and from sin, the seducers, thieves, deceivers of nations, adulterers, people who abort their children, child-murderers, drunkards, embezzlers. His enemies are those who, in their own political struggle, find the teachings of Jesus and the religious convictions of the Christian people an unpleasant barrier. It is also a striking phenomenon in the history of mankind that it is often the greatest benefactors of humanity who have suffered roadblocks, persecutions and undeserved death.

5.21 JESUS WAS ALSO SOMETIMES MISTAKEN; FOR EXAMPLE, HE BELIEVED THAT THE END OF THE WORLD WOULD COME IN THE LIFETIME OF “THIS GENERATION” (MT 24:34).

This does not stand. In the chapter from Matthew, from which the quote is taken, the two great prophecies of Jesus about the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world are interwoven. Indeed, the generation that heard him did not die completely without some of its members having experienced the destruction of Jerusalem. As for the end of the world, it can also be said that the generation of Christ will not pass away in a spiritual sense until the end of the world is at hand. The way the evangelist presents these two prophecies makes it understandable that some confuse the two. But two verses later, Jesus Himself says that He does not want to define the time of the end of the world with these statements, because only the Father knows the day and hour. (Mt. 24:36) Only superficially, therefore, can one say that Jesus was “mistaken” about the time of the coming of the end of the world.

5.22 JESUS DESPAIRED ON THE CROSS.

Jesus did not despair on the cross. The cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” [Mark 15:34] is a simple and humble lament, a lamentation, an expression of spiritual pain, but not despair.

Also, it should be known that the phrase quoted was not even a simple lamentation, but much more than that: it was an application of the first line of Psalm 21 to Himself. And this psalm is the most beautiful and expressive messianic psalm: a prophecy of the Messiah’s redemptive suffering, in striking detail, a thousand years before the event. In this psalm it is foretold that the Messiah will be killed, surrounded and mocked by his enemies, given vinegar and gall to drink, pierced hand and foot, and His bones can almost be counted, His clothes divided up and a lot cast on His vesture [Matthew 27:35], so that the famous German scripture scholar Franz Delitzsch says of this psalm that it is a true Passion story, as if it had been written on Golgotha itself. The same psalm also prophesies the resurrection and eternal glory of the tortured Messiah. So when Jesus quotes this psalm in reference to Himself on the cross, it really meant something other than despair!

5.23 IT IS A HORRIBLE THOUGHT THAT GOD COULD ONLY BE ATONED FOR BY THE BLOODY AND CRUEL MURDER OF HIS OWN SON! A GOD WHO THIRSTS FOR THE BLOOD OF HIS SON!

[...] The Father did not thirst for the bloody death of His own Son, but the Son Himself, out of love and mercy, desired not only to descend to us, but also to make full satisfaction to divine justice for our sins by the bloody and voluntary sacrifice of His own body. The death of the God-man is not, therefore, a bloody cruelty, but, on the contrary, a majestic manifestation of divine mercy and love.

5.24 JESUS DID NOT WANT TO FOUND A NEW RELIGION AT ALL: HE WANTED TO RESTORE THE JEWISH RELIGION TO ITS ORIGINAL GLORY.

Yes, but with essential elements added. Namely, by replacing the promises by their fulfillment, the synagogue by the Church, the old sacrifices by the uninterrupted, mysterious renewal of His one, final and redemptive sacrifice, and the grace of the sacraments. In other words: Jesus did indeed found a new religion, Christianity, but as a continuation and completion of the old, as the fulfillment of the Old Testament revelation.

5.25 CHRISTIANITY IS THE RESULT OF HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT. JESUS HIMSELF WAS GRADUALLY RAISED TO THE THRONE OF DIVINITY ONLY BY THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE FIRST BELIEVERS.

Pure fantasy! Christianity has, of course, also undergone a certain historical development: it has spread outwards more and more, and has also expressed the rich, divine content of its doctrines more and more clearly inwards. But in the light of history, Christianity cannot be regarded as a result of a development due to mere historical circumstances. Christianity has its origin in a great historical fact: the appearance, the ministry, the personality, the death and the resurrection of Jesus, without which it could not be explained by any historical development.

That only the blind enthusiasm and myth-seeking fervour of the early believers would have slowly woven the shiny wreath of the divine sonship around Jesus’ head, and that the original, miracle-free and divinity-free text of the Gospels would have been formed accordingly, are assumptions so audacious and clumsy that they are contradicted by every

historical fact. The first Christians were not blind, mythical enthusiasts, but, on the contrary, the apostles themselves were initially very petty, sober, doubting men who, only with great difficulty, under the influence of the sunlight of revelations and miraculous deeds, opened their eyes and accepted the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus as an inescapable and undeniable truth. Nor did their followers believe them blindly, but only on the basis of the testimonies which the apostles had communicated to them.

What an idea, too, that thousands, tens of thousands, soon to be hundreds of thousands of men should have undertaken the greatest renunciations, sufferings, tortures, and deaths, without investigating that what the apostles preached was really true! Were all of them fools and madmen at that time to undertake a thousand pains and finally an agonizing death for nothing? [...]

5.26 WHAT BECAME OF THE NATIONS WHO LIVED BEFORE CHRIST?

They lacked the fullness of light and grace that only the Church of Jesus offers to humanity. But they too could be saved if they believed in God and in the Saviour promised by God, and thus this redeeming grace had already served to justify them. They could not enter the kingdom of heaven until the act of salvation happened, and hence the ancient "Apostles' Creed" says that Jesus, after his death, "descended into hell", that is, appeared among the souls waiting for salvation, to open salvation first to them. Christianity, like the redemptive death of Jesus, was itself a decision of God's free grace, not a right on our part, and God must have had a reason for waiting thousands of years to send a Saviour; perhaps to show the voluntary, free-giving character of his redemptive intervention, and at the same time to give the world a foretaste of what it would sink to if left to its own devices without a Saviour.

5.27 DID JESUS REALLY REDEEM HUMANITY? FOR THERE IS STILL SO MUCH SIN, HATRED AND WAR ON EARTH TODAY!

Yes, but precisely where the teachings of Jesus are not recognized, accepted and followed. Christ has redeemed the world in so far as He has satisfied divine justice for our sins and, in addition, taught us the conditions of a life pleasing to God. But He has left it to us to use the fruits of His redemption for our own benefit by our own determination and our own moral ambition. If we do not do this, the redemption will indeed remain unfruitful for us.

Where and insofar as Jesus finds open doors in souls and society, there may also be suffering and affliction, but it will be ennobled and softened by the faith in Jesus, the help of grace and the radiance of eternal hope; sin and despair will not take up residence there. Are there wars? Is there hatred and exploitation on earth? Yes, where there is no Jesus, or where His doctrines are not understood and misinterpreted, there indeed all evil is rampant. It only follows that the world has a great deal to develop to become truly Christian and, with it, to have a truly great, happy and balanced life.

5.28 SALVATION CONSISTS AT MAXIMUM IN JESUS TEACHING US THE LAW OF LOVE FOR OUR NEIGHBOUR.

Loving our neighbour is indeed one of Jesus' supreme laws, though not the first, for the most important commandment commands us to love and serve God perfectly. But for Jesus, true love of God and of man is based on and conditioned by true faith, and the keeping of the commandments is the area of the enforcement of this double love. This is what those who wish to eliminate everything else from the Gospel and from Jesus' precepts like to forget, and who wish to give priority to love of neighbour on a purely natural basis, by taking it out of the context of the love of God, true faith and the duty of keeping all the commandments. This is nothing less than a mutilation and falsification of the religion of Jesus. Besides, the essence of salvation is not to be found in the commandment to love, but in the atonement for our sins, the sacrifice of the cross.

5.29 CHRISTIANITY'S BELIEF IN THE AFTERLIFE REDUCES LIFE ON EARTH TO MEANINGLESSNESS.

On the contrary, only this gives it its full moral significance. For it is on this life that our eternal destiny, lasting for endless ages, depends. Then this life is of unheard-of importance, because the question of our eternal happiness or unhappiness depends on how we have used this life: according to God's commandments or in against them.

5.30 CHRISTIANITY DESPISES THE BODY.

Perhaps more accurately, Christianity is primarily concerned with the soul, because it is indeed a million times more important whether we cherish the values of our soul than the values of our body. But Christianity does not despise the human body either, as a certain incompetent or biased literature constantly repeats, but on the contrary, it regards it as sacred: a masterpiece of God and companion of the soul; a temple in which the Spirit of God dwells, as St. Paul says (1 Cor. 3:16) The much-maligned Christian Middle Ages did not despise the body, as is shown by the great development of medieval sculpture and painting, which also revered the external form of man and, regarding it as the dwelling place of the Spirit, made it the subject of loving study and much artistic representation.

5.31 CHRISTIANITY TEACHES CONTEMPT FOR THE WORLD.

No, it does not teach contempt for the world. It teaches only the right subordination of worldly things to the eternal purpose and divine law.

Besides, do we really need to worry that men today might want to despise worldly goods so much? The danger is far greater that excessive worldliness will lead men to rampant rivalry, to trampling on rights, to selfishness, to the exploitation of their neighbour. It is precisely the great Christians and the saints who have been the greatest promoters of the earthly well-being of nations.

5.32 CHRISTIANITY DESPISES MARRIED LIFE, CONSIDERS WOMEN TO BE A SOURCE OF SIN AND DESPISES MOTHERHOOD.

This can often be read in certain newspaper articles and “scientific” ravings, but it is not the truth. So much so that it was Christianity that lifted woman out of the humiliating abyss into which antiquity had plunged her. It was Christianity that raised woman to the altar, that gave her the most glorious exaltation in the Blessed Virgin. And Christianity has elevated married life to the dignity of a sacrament. How, then, can such gross fabrications be used to infect public opinion again and again?

Christianity only considers love life a sin, considers women as an “occasion of sin” for men and men for women, if it is debauchery, prohibited outbursts of sexuality, contrary to the moral law and the Gospel commandment. Christianity does not allow the vulgar and unbridled defilement of women and motherhood, and generally warns that the main aim and guide is not the mere instinct of the body, but the laws of the soul. Of course, this does not please depraved and debauched men, and that is why they hurl insults on the sexual morality of Christianity.

5.33 THE GOSPEL IS FULL OF NAIVETY. WHAT DOES IT MEAN, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT JESUS “ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN”? WHAT IS “HEAVEN”? AND THAT GOD “CROWNED” THE VIRGIN MARY IN HEAVEN? ARE THERE CROWNS IN HEAVEN? MADE OF WHAT? WOOD? IRON? GOLD? DO THEY KEEP CROWNS THERE LIKE IN A THEATER PROP ROOM?

It is indeed naïve of us to imagine even the most sublime things in an earthly, childish, too human way. If, for example, we understand the Ascension as the body of Christ physically ascending to some place among the stars, and heaven is necessarily a place or state tied to material space. Or that the afterlife “crown” of which St. Paul speaks, that is, the final reward and glorification, means a kind of human “coronation”. If religion is compelled to work with both worldly and human images in its demonstration of spiritual things, if, for example, Scripture itself says on the first page that God not only conversed with men but also “walked” [Gen. 3:8] in paradise, this is of course nothing other than the expression in human forms of a direct and wonderful contact with God, of which every serious man can immediately understand what is the content and what the external form.

What is certain, however, is that religious life often accumulates an unnecessary amount of naive things through the fault of certain people, and that this undermines the authority of religion in the eyes of people of higher intelligence and more independent thinking. For example, the many pious folk tales which some people attach to religious life, the not always tasteful way in which certain groups of people practice their religious life in church and outside the church, the somewhat childish, even old-fashioned style in which they express their religious thoughts orally or in writing, sometimes do not really serve to the glory of religion.

But what can be concluded from these phenomena? Only that men are small, and like to put the greatest things into forms and formulas which are suited to their smallness. [...]

5.34 THE TEACHING OF JESUS IS NO LONGER RECOGNIZABLE TODAY.

The true teachings of Jesus cannot indeed be recognized in the confusion of conflicting denominations, but they can be recognized in the one true Church, the Church which Christ founded and which he himself promised to preserve from all error.

CHURCH

6.1 WE NEED RELIGION, BUT WE DON'T NEED A CHURCH.

You could say: we need a car, but not a wheel. We need health, but we don't need health care. We need lunch, but we don't need a cook. A Church is needed precisely to preach religion, to administer its affairs regularly, to conduct official worship, to instruct people in religious life, lest anyone should do something improper, undignified, superstitious or even immoral in the name of religion.

Besides, whether we need a Church is not for us to decide. It was decided long ago by the one who alone is competent to decide: Christ our Lord himself. For He himself has openly said that He is building a Church, and that He is building it on Peter, and He and the apostles speak often of the Church, of the kingdom of God, of an organized community of believers. So he, who does not need a Church, is opposing Christ Himself.

6.2 SO WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

The Church is an organized community of believers, ordered by Christ, which has an organizational character precisely because it has leaders and the led, superiors and subjects, according to the command of Christ. The leaders are those who, by Christ's decree, exercise in the Church the power of teaching, of dispensing the sacraments and of governing souls. This hierarchical (priestly) constitution of the Church is undoubtedly the ordinance of Christ Himself.

6.3 CHRIST SAYS THAT "THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU" AND THAT IT "COMETH NOT WITH OBSERVATION" (LK 17:20-21).

With this Christ was correcting the misconception, which was initially widespread among the apostles, that the Jewish messianic kingdom would appear in the form of some worldly, shining Jewish kingdom, with external powers, glittering weapons and banners of victory. In contrast, Jesus emphasizes that the kingdom of God is already here, among you and in you; you don't have to go far to find it. In no way, however, does He say that the kingdom of God is merely some disorganized, invisible, intangible inner lifestyle, as some have tried to explain it since the 16th century.

6.4 IS IT CERTAIN THAT JESUS FOUNDED A CHURCH AT ALL? IS DIRECT FAITH IN HIM NOT ENOUGH?

If we accept the Gospel at all, we must also accept what we read in it about the founding of the Church by Jesus. The Gospel clearly and explicitly speaks of the Church which Jesus builds on Peter as a rock, and he who does not listen to it will be like a Gentile and a tax collector (Mt 16:18; 18:17). Moreover, the Gospel also lists the actions of Jesus which, even if Jesus does not explicitly mention the Church, involve the organization of a religious community – the Church – with a leadership under divine authority.

What is the Church? It is a society of Catholic Christians throughout the world, of which the visible head is the successor of Saint Peter. All the marks of this Church come from Christ. Jesus entrusted the spiritual guidance of the faithful to His disciples, whose preaching and sacramental ministry must be used by all who want be saved; in other words, he established a Church organization, with leaders and members, church prelates and subjects, priests and faithful. There can be no doubt, therefore, that Jesus did not intend to found a mere school or a theory of religious philosophy, but a Church to which all who come to know the Church as the creation of Jesus must belong.

6.5 THE CHURCH IS AN UNNECESSARY INTRUSION BETWEEN GOD AND THE SOUL. THERE IS NO NEED FOR AN INTER-MEDIARY: THE SOUL MUST BE DIRECTLY CONNECTED TO GOD.

Both are necessary: the soul's direct connection with God, and the need for the Church to establish, consolidate and correctly guide this connection. The Church does not "interfere" and does not separate the soul from God, but the other way around: it leads the soul to God. Where there is no Church, there is no serious religiosity, or at least not the organized, protected, legitimate religiosity that Jesus ordained. He who sees in the Church a nuisance and an obstacle is opposed to the ordinance of Jesus; if, in the eyes of any one, the Church "interposes" between Jesus and souls, this interposition is due to the express ordinance of Christ Himself.

6.6 HOW MANY CHURCHES DID CHRIST FOUND?

Christ obviously founded only one Church. He always speaks of only one Church, one kingdom of God, and wants them all to belong to it in full unity: “there shall be one fold and one shepherd” (John 10:16). St Paul derives the law of the unity and indissolubility of marriage from the fact that the marriage of believers is “One body and one Spirit; as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” (Eph 4:4-5). He also emphasizes that there must be no denominations or divisions in the Church. “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no schisms among you; but that you be perfect in the same mind, and in the same judgment.” (1 Cor 1:10).

This is why the great martyr bishop Ignatius of Antioch, at the very beginning of the 2nd century, says: “Make no mistake, brethren: he who follows schism cannot obtain the inheritance of the kingdom of God” (Philad. 3, 2. 3.); and St. Irenaeus, the great martyr bishop of Lyon, in the middle of the 2nd century: “Those who are outside the Church are outside the truth.” And St. Augustine exhorts, “Hold fast, therefore, my dearly beloved, all of you, with one will, to God as your Father and to the Church as your mother” (In Psalm. 88; 2, 14).

There is no question, therefore, of being able to reconcile the doctrine of the “plural Church”, a group of denominations which differ profoundly from one another in all essentials: doctrine, organization, aspiration, with the principles of Jesus and the early Church.

6.7 THE CHURCH: THE ASSEMBLY OF CHRISTIANS WHO BELIEVE IN JESUS. SO IT IS NOT JUST THIS OR THAT PARTICULAR CHURCH. ALL DENOMINATIONS ARE EQUAL BEFORE GOD.

Huge mistake! The Church ordained by Christ is not simply a collective name for all denominations of believers in Jesus, but only members of the Church built by Jesus: those who stand on the rock foundation on which Jesus built His Church; who follow the shepherd whom Jesus entrusted with the government of his whole flock. The rest may stand outside the Church by individual good-faith error, and may even be saved by that good-faith; but they are not in the right way, and are not members of Jesus’ Church.

6.8 SO, ARE EASTERN ORTHODOX OR PROTESTANTS NOT MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS?

They may be members “in spirit”, that is to say, if they are in good faith in error, and in the depths of their souls they want to belong to the true Church of Jesus at all events, then they also belong to the true Church in spirit and unconsciously; but not officially and explicitly. The true Church of Jesus is only the Catholic Church.

6.9 IS THIS NOT INCREDIBLE INTOLERANCE AND AMBITION?

We repeat: in spirit others may be disciples of Jesus, but in reality and organizationally only Catholics are members of the true, Christian Church. Is it intolerance to assert this? It would only be so if, out of sheer human pride or arrogance, we were to claim, unjustly and without basis, to be the only true Church of Jesus. But it is not so. It is Jesus Himself who alone in the Church of St. Peter, that is, the Catholic Church, realizes the characteristics of the true Church which He founded. And to state this is not intolerance, but simple obedience and fidelity to Jesus’ precepts.

6.10 HOW CAN WE KNOW WHICH OF THE MANY CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IS THE TRUE, LEGITIMATE, SINGLE CHURCH FOUNDED BY CHRIST?

By which of these churches fulfills all the marks of the Christian provision: unity, holiness, universality and apostolicity. These marks are perfectly fulfilled, individually and collectively, only in the Holy Roman Catholic Mother Church. In other denominations there is neither complete unity, nor institutional holiness of life, nor universality, nor, above all, legal descent from the Apostolic Church, nor perfect harmony with the Apostolic See, the See of St. Peter, which still exists today.

6.11 THE CHURCH OF ROME HAS LONG BEEN CORRUPTED AND IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE IT FINALLY COLLAPSES.

This is strongly contradicted by Jesus' infallible promise that He will remain with the Church "all days, even to the consummation of the world". (Mt 28:20) and by his other statement that as long as the Church stands on the rocky foundation of St Peter, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18). Did Jesus say something false, or do the enemies of the Catholic Church speak falsely?

6.12 DO CATHOLICS BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE THE "ONLY-SAVING CHURCH"?

If Jesus did indeed ordain only one Church and entrusted to it the means of salvation, then it is natural that this one, legitimate Church is the only saving one. There is only one God, one baptism, one faith, says St Paul. "Those who are outside the Church are outside the truth," says Irenaeus. But it does not follow that those who are in good faith outside the Church cannot also belong in spirit, unconsciously, to that Church, and so be saved.

6.13 ON WHAT BASIS IS THE POPE CALLED THE SUCCESSOR OF PETER? DID ST. PETER LEAVE HIS SPECIAL JURISDICTION TO THE BISHOP OF ROME?

St. Peter did in fact die as a Roman bishop: there is no longer any dispute among serious historians today. The legitimate Bishop of Rome is the legitimate successor of the Apostle Peter, and therefore heir to his special jurisdiction. For, just as Christ our Lord did not intend the Church itself, and the whole of His work, to last for a few years or decades, but for ever: "to the consummation of the world", as He Himself says, so He also established its constitution, that is to say, the central Church government, the office of Peter as the main apostle, for ever. It was not, therefore, Saint Peter who bequeathed papal power to his successors, but Jesus Himself who so decreed, when He entrusted Saint Peter with the main leadership of His Church, and, like the Church itself and its essential system of government, He also decreed that this primacy should be perpetual.

6.14 IS THERE ANY EVIDENCE THAT PETER LIVED AND DIED IN ROME?

There is ample evidence for this, and even serious Protestant historians today are forced to bow before this historical fact. St. Peter himself, at the end of his first letter (5:13), clearly implies that he is writing from Rome ("Babylon"), the centre of paganism at that time. Clear testimony to St. Peter's time in Rome is given by Clement of Rome (d. 97), Ignatius of Antioch (d. 107), Dionysius of Corinth (d. c. 170), Irenaeus (d. 202) and others. There has never been any doubt about this among the writers of the ancient church, and it is now admitted by all serious Protestant historians.

6.15 THE DOCTRINE OF THE PAPACY IS NOT IN THE BIBLE.

It sure is there, and how much so! Not, of course, by the word "papacy"; for the word "Trinity" is not in it either. But it is there quite clearly in its essence, in its conceptual content. It is in the words of Jesus His clear ordinance of building His Church on Peter as a rock, and that this will be the condition of the Church's solidity, by which "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it". It is expressly stated in Scripture that Jesus gives to Peter, the chief apostle, the keys of the kingdom of heaven, that is, of the Church, which obviously means that he makes him the supreme governor, legislator and leader of the Church. What Peter binds or looses on earth, God also binds or looses in heaven. Could there be a clearer expression of the full ecclesiastical governmental power of the Pope in the Bible? [...] Someone who says that the papacy is not in the Bible, is speaking wrongly. He might just as well say that the doctrine of the Trinity itself is not in the Bible.

In any case, it is not in the Bible that Luther or Calvin were divinely ordained reformers, and that their teachings deserve credence. On what basis then do those who "believe only what is in the Bible" believe this?

6.16 THE APOSTLES WERE ALL OF EQUAL RANK, AND ST. PAUL HIMSELF SAYS THAT HE VIGOROUSLY OPPOSED PETER.

St. Paul indeed wished for more consistency from St. Peter in the matter of the exemption of the baptized Jews from the Mosaic Law, and blamed Peter's action on this practical or methodological issue. This, however, in no way implies that he did not acknowledge his superior jurisdiction. It is possible to criticize someone's governmental procedure, even

vehemently, but this does not constitute either a revolution or a denial of supremacy in principle. That the apostles were not equal, but recognized Peter as their head, is shown by the fact that the Scriptures always mention Peter in a distinctive way, and it is Peter who solemnly proclaims the decision of the first so-called Apostolic Council (Acts 15:28).

6.17 THE WORD “ROCK” DOES NOT IMPLY PETER’S PRIMACY. IT IS NOT OF PETER, BUT OF FAITH THAT JESUS SAYS THAT IT IS THE ROCK ON WHICH HIS CHURCH IS BUILT.

This explanation is completely contrary to the facts. Jesus did not identify Peter’s faith as the rock, but Peter himself. Faith was only a prerequisite, the foundation on which Peter, the possessor of faith, was then honoured with this distinction. So much does Jesus emphasize Peter’s person here that he even solemnly mentions his father’s name: “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona...” “And I say to thee: That thou art Peter”: here again, he is clearly emphasizing the person.

This is confirmed as the only possible explanation by the context, namely the following text, where Jesus also entrusts Peter with the keys to the kingdom of heaven. A mere abstract faith cannot be entrusted with keys, i.e., since the power of keys in Eastern languages means this, to delegate governing and legislative authority. “[W]hatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth... whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth...” are also all obviously personal honours and commissions. [...]

This is so clear that the Protestant theologian Pfleiderer himself notes that this statement of Jesus could only be explained by a denominational bias in a different sense than that of the papacy.

6.18 THE “KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN” ARE OBVIOUSLY ONLY A CUSTODIAL, “KEYHOLDING” FUNCTION, THE MANAGEMENT OF THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THE MOTHER CHURCH, BUT NOT A JURISDICTION OR SUPREMACY.

Not so; for the handing over of the keys of the “kingdom” or of the city has always signified, in the old languages, the right of plenary government. This, moreover, is evident from the following words of Jesus, “And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound also in heaven” etc., i.e., I commit to you not only the material care of the Church, not only the external, administrative duties, but also the legislation, the government, the full governance of souls, and that all of your acts in this regard shall be done with divine authority, and shall be approved by heaven.

[...]

6.19 SO WHY DO THE EASTERN ORTHODOX NOT RECOGNIZE THE BISHOP OF ROME AS POPE?

Because they have been blinded by a spirit of inequality and a passion for rivalry. Because their political ambition would not allow them, the people of Constantinople, the inhabitants of the capital of the empire, the Church of the East, which always thought itself superior, to submit to the then politically insignificant Bishop of Rome. They were mistaken in believing that the supreme government of the Church could only be a function of some political powers, and they were conformed to a spirit of political rivalry and ambition rather than a spirit of meekness and humility.

6.20 WAS THIS OPPOSITION BETWEEN EAST AND WEST EVIDENT FROM THE BEGINNING?

In certain external aspects, such as in the ritual practice, yes, but not in faith and church discipline. For many centuries, the Orientals themselves recognized the supremacy of the Roman bishop. Already one of the first popes, Clement of Rome (d. 97 AD), had a full sense of supremacy over the Corinthian faithful; likewise Pope Victor I in the dispute over the manner of celebrating Easter. The first ecumenical council (Nicea 325) was presided over by the Pope’s legates, who - a bishop and three ordinary priests - signed the conciliar declarations in the first place, and therefore before all the other bishops. At the Council of Chalcedon (451), after the reading of the letter of Pope Leo I, the Council Fathers, almost all Greeks and Orientals, jumped up from their seats and cried out, “In Leo, Peter has spoken!” and obeyed the Pope.

And so it remained until the 9th century, when the imperial whim placed in the bishopric of Constantinople an ambitious secular official, the talented but theologically ignorant and unscrupulous Photius, who, with purely political passions, declared secession from Rome. The secession was then reversed, but two centuries later an equally passionate and

ambitious bishop of Constantinople, Michael Cerularis, led the East into secession once again.

This was certainly not the fulfillment of Christ's command, but the contamination of the Church with political passions. From that time onward, the agitation in the East against Rome was so unbridled that, apart from a brief attempt at union (Florence, 1439), schism was rooted in the souls of the Easterners.

6.21 WHY THEN DO THE PROTESTANTS NOT RECOGNIZE THE POPE?

Because Martin Luther wanted to defend his own errors against the papal authority and went into revolution. He wanted to create subversion in the Church, and so he necessarily found himself confronted with the papal authority, which was the guardian of unity. It was not evangelical arguments but his rigid adherence to his own individual interpretation of Scripture that led Martin Luther into anti-papalism and schism. The same can be said of the other reformers, who rightly saw the Pope as the guardian of ecclesiastical unity and legality, and who, because they wanted to push this unity and legality out of the way, launched a fierce fight against the symbol and guardian of unity: the papacy.

6.22 IF I HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH OF THE POPE, I PREFER THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

The only problem is that you cannot choose between the two, because they are one and the same. The papacy is ordained by Christ, there is no doubt about that. [...] It is interesting how such cheap slogans can be used to appease simple-minded people! It does not occur to these poor misguided people, of course, that they might prefer to modify their smarty reasoning a little, like this: if I have to choose between the true Church of Christ built on St. Peter and the Church of Martin Luther or John Calvin, I would really prefer the Church of Christ! But that is in fact the case. Here is the Church of Christ, as the Lord Himself built it on Peter (Mt 16:18-19); there are human churches, arbitrarily put together by men in the 16th century.

6.23 THE TRUE CHRISTIAN BOWS ONLY TO DIVINE AUTHORITY, WHILE CATHOLICS BOW TO HUMAN AUTHORITY.

It is a waste to keep on coming up with such empty talk for four hundred years, and to disturb the peace unnecessarily. For the Catholics, too, bow before the one true God only, as the ultimate and supreme authority, but for God's sake and according to God's order they bow before human authorities whom God has set up to lead the faithful. Is this idolatry? Is it not also the case, in the life of the state or in the army, that it is not only the head of state himself who is to be obeyed, but all those who are lawful participants and representatives of the supreme power: [...] Is it otherwise true that Protestants bow only to divine authority in matters of religion and denomination? Is not their bishop or their congregation also the supreme authority in their eyes? And still more, Martin Luther and the tradition of the Reformers? After all, some Protestant doctrines are held so stubbornly only because Luther or Calvin taught them so, even if they themselves hardly believe them (e.g. predestination). What is more, they have even adopted without a word a great deal of Christian tradition which is not in Scripture: infant baptism, keeping Sunday holy instead of Saturday, the observance of certain feasts, the order and text of the Scriptures, which only the Catholic Church tradition can directly testify to. Why, then, should we accuse others of what we practice, and in some cases very rightly and wisely?

We know that the Bible itself is the Bible and the Word of God only on the authority of the Church!

6.24 ORAL TRADITION IS UNRELIABLE.

We Catholics don't bow to "oral tradition"; that misleading word could only have been invented by misleading intent. Christian tradition means the official, ancient teaching of the Church, not "oral tradition", or hearsay, as some backward debaters would have the gullible believe.

6.25 CHRIST DIED FOR ALL, NOT JUST FOR MEMBERS OF ONE CHURCH.

Christ died for all, but for this very reason He wants all to belong to the Church through which He has bequeathed to us the fruits of His redemptive death as the means of salvation. All can be saved, but they must then join the true Church: so Jesus Himself commanded. Outside the Church, only those who do not belong to it through good faith and invincible error can be saved.

6.26 THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IS ALSO OF APOSTOLIC ORIGIN.

To a certain extent, no doubt, since the apostles converted men and founded churches primarily in the East. However, the question here is not merely one of material and historical origin: whether Christianity here or there can be traced back historically to the founding of the apostles, but of formal and legal apostolicity. In other words, whether a particular Christian group has remained in organic unity with the apostolic church government ordained by Christ, of which Peter, also by Christ's order, is the visible head, and his successors in the Roman See. If in a church the legal relationship with Peter has been severed, it is no longer an apostolic church, and apostolic continuity has been broken. This is why, for example, the Church of England is no longer apostolic, even though the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury is indeed the successor of the bishop who was once sent by Pope Gregory the Great to convert the British Isles.

[...]

6.27 POPES CAN ALSO ERR AND SIN; HISTORY IS FULL OF THE SINS OF POPES.

The objection here confuses two things: infallibility and impeccability. No one says that popes cannot sin, and that they have not sinned throughout history, sometimes seriously. Individual impeccability is quite another thing, and official infallibility is quite another. We say official because a pope is not infallible in his individual opinions; he is infallible only when, as head of the whole Church, he declares officially and solemnly (*ex cathedra*) that something belongs to the deposit of the Christian faith.

This infallibility of the Pope is a logical corollary of the infallibility of the Church, solemnly proclaimed by Jesus when he demands obedience to the Church under the penalty of eternal damnation, saying that "And if he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican." (public sinner; Mt 18:17).

6.28 THE POPES ALSO TAUGHT THINGS THAT LATER PROVED TO BE WRONG.

This is possible, but they did not teach it solemnly and formally as the supreme teachers of the Church. When the Pope preaches something, he can do it in one of two ways: solemnly or in an ordinary, simple form. Infallibility is due only in the former case.

6.29 SO IS IT PERMISSIBLE TO CONTRADICT THE POPE WHEN HE DOES NOT TEACH SOMETHING SOLEMNLY?

If the Pope does not solemnly proclaim something "*ex cathedra*" as the official doctrine of the Church, then it is indeed permissible, with due respect and moderation, to speak against it to anyone who has the necessary theological training and who sees that there are aspects of a doctrine which the Pope does not know well enough. With due respect and moderation, that is to say, not on the basis of rebellion and overconfidence, but with the obedient willingness to submit, if we are wrong, willingly to the decision of the competent judge, that is to say, the Pope. It may have been such a confrontation when St. Paul (on a disciplinary rather than a doctrinal issue: the conditions for the admission of Jewish Christians) "confronted Peter"; whereupon Peter bowed to his argument. However, as soon as the Pope solemnly defines something in the name of the whole Church, solemnly decides it, declares it dogma, contradiction is out of question, as was the case, for example, at the [First] Vatican Council: Until the decisions were promulgated by the Pope, the bishops present had the right to disagree with the Pope's opinion; but afterwards all had to recognize the Pope's decision, and indeed all, even those who had previously disagreed, recognized it.

6.30 THE PAPACY DID NOT EMERGE UNTIL CENTURIES AFTER CHRIST, AND THAT ON THE BASIS OF POLITICAL AMBITION. UNTIL THEN, THE INDIVIDUAL CHURCHES WERE ALL EQUAL.

A complete historical error. The Bishop of Rome was indeed recognized from the very beginning as the head and guardian of the whole Church by other churches or ecclesiastical centers. As early as Pope Clement of Rome, at the end of the 1st century, wrote a commanding letter to the Corinthian faithful. Ignatius of Antioch (d. 107-110) calls the Church of Rome the "head of the community of love", and Pope Victor VI (c. 191), under pain of excommunication, obliges the congregations of Asia to follow his instructions in setting the time of Easter. St. Irenaeus, around 180, declares that the Bishop of Rome is the authoritative bishop for the whole of the Mother Church, because he is the successor of St. Peter, and lists the names of the first 13 popes. The testimony of this early Christian witness, himself an Oriental

by origin, is worth quoting word for word. Irenaeus writes of the Church of Rome: “With this Church, by reason of her pre-eminent primacy, the whole Church must be united, that is to say, all the faithful, wherever they dwell, for in this Church the ancients have preserved the tradition handed down from the Apostles.” (Adv. haer. III. 3, 2.) Tertullian, who joined the Montanist heresy, writes with scorn of Pope St. Callixtus, that he attributes to himself the authority over the whole Church which our Lord Christ gave only to the Apostle Peter personally. This is another sign that the Catholics already then, towards 200, regarded the Bishop of Rome as the full successor of the Apostle Peter. In 251, the Bishop of Carthage, St Cyprian, praises at length and in eloquent words the authority of the Bishop of Rome over the whole Church, which is all the more significant because he himself had disputed with the Pope on certain matters. He first explains that, although Christ appointed several apostles, he gave to Peter the supreme power of governing the Church; and then he continues, “Is there any man left in the faith who does not hold this unity of the Church? Can he who opposes and resists the Church, trust that he himself is a member of the Church?” He goes on to call the Church of Rome “Peter’s cathedra” and “the leading Church”. At the same time, everyone, even heretics or deposed bishops, are constantly appealing to Rome, seeking and accepting decisions from the Roman bishops. How, then, can anyone in good conscience say that the Roman papacy was only established centuries after Christ?

The supremacy of the Holy See in Rome was not, therefore, founded on political ambition, but, as these same ancient witnesses affirm, on the belief that Jesus himself had appointed Peter, and with him Peter’s legitimate successors, as supreme leaders of the Church.

6.31 THERE IS NO TRACE OF PRIESTLY AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH OF THE APOSTLES.

The age and work of the apostles is full of the consciousness and exercise of hierarchical authority. They act, teach and govern as if they had received this authority not from themselves but from Christ and God. “He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me” (Lk. 10:16). “[L]et him be anathema”, says St. Paul, who, even if an angel from heaven, would preach another gospel, than what they, the apostles preached (Gal. 1:8). They refer to the sending of Christ (Rom. 1:1.5; 15:18.19; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Thess. 1:8; 3:14). They give commands to the Church (Acts 15:28; 16:4; 1 Cor. 11:2.34; 5:3; 1 Tim. 1:19). They entrust the same authority to the bishops they ordain. It cannot be said, therefore, that in the beginning there was no hierarchy and no priestly supremacy in the Church.

6.32 AT LEAST THERE IS NO TRACE OF PAPAL AUTHORITY, OF PETER’S SUPREMACY, IN THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

But how much there is! The evangelists and the writings of the apostles constantly mention Peter first (“Peter and those with him”, “Peter and the eleven”, “Peter and the other apostles”, and once even “Peter and the apostles” Mk. 1:36; [...]; Acts 2:14.37; 5:29) Peter is always presiding and speaking for the others [...], he is the one who makes the decrees (15), visits and confirms the congregations (Acts 9:32 and following).

6.33 THE POPES WERE SLOW TO SEIZE POWER OVER THE WHOLE CHURCH.

This is not the case, for papal supremacy is clearly set forth in the Gospel, and the early Christian Church was in all essential cases fully conformed to papal supremacy. It is only around the manner of exercising this supremacy that a gradual, historical development can be observed, inasmuch as the Church has only gradually worked out the principle contained in Jesus’ precept, as with most statements of Christ in general, to its full clarity. For even the final and full dogmatic clarification of the divinity of Jesus was only achieved due to the Arian struggles during the Councils of Nicea and subsequent Councils. In the same way, the doctrine of the Papacy was from the beginning acknowledged and professed in principle by the whole Holy Mother Church; yet, in the practical application of the principle, there was at times a certain hesitation, and in places there were also obscurantist tendencies. It was for this very reason that a complete clarification of this doctrine of Christ became necessary, and this was mainly due to the [First] Vatican Council (1870).

6.34 ACCORDING TO THIS, ARE WE OBLIGED TO LISTEN TO THE CHURCH IN EVERYTHING?

In matters of faith and morals, of course; that is why St Paul says that the Church is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15).

The early Church has already professed this, in the words of Bishop St Cyprian, said: “He cannot have God as Father who does not have the Church as mother.”

6.35 ALL THIS IS ABOUT THE APOSTLES, BUT NOT ABOUT THE PRIESTS OF TODAY.

Christ expressly founded his Church for all times ([...]; Mt. 28:20; 13:39; Jn. 14:16; 1 Cor. 11:26), and therefore also its organizational forms. We read that the apostles themselves ordained successors, e.g. St. Paul ordained Titus and Timothy and commanded them to ordain others as successors and helpers in the apostolate (Acts 14:23; [...]; Tit. 1:6; 2:15). The same is written by Clement of Rome about the apostles (First Epistle to the Corinthians 42 and 44).

It is only a question, therefore, who are the legitimate successors of the apostles, who, in an unbroken continuity, can derive from them the ordination and mission. There can be no doubt that the Catholic clergy is based on apostolic succession, which is lacking where, even by their own admission, the people elect and the unordained bishops, without apostolic succession, “nominate” the pastors.

6.36 IS IT POSSIBLE, THEN, TO FOLLOW AN ERRONEOUS FAITH AND STILL BE SAVED, AND EVEN BE A MARTYR AND A SAINT?

Yes, it is possible. Even among non-Christians, we must assume that many receive mercy by having spiritually sought the way of truth and only remaining in a non-Christian religion by virtue of a bona fide error. The effects of grace are wider than those of the Church. The Church, by the ordinance of Christ, is the ordinary guardian of the acquisition and cultivation of divine grace, and possesses special and abundant means of doing so; but this does not mean that the stream of grace does not flow outside the Church at all. These two propositions are not, therefore, mutually exclusive: that the Catholic Church is the true Church of Christ, and yet that, in an extraordinary way, those outside the Church may be saved by the Church to which they belong in spirit and unconsciously.

6.37 DOES IT MATTER THEN TO WHICH DENOMINATION ONE BELONGS?

Wrong conclusion! It does matter! If a man recognizes the true Church and does not follow it, he has sinned grievously against the Holy Spirit, and if he does not repent and make reparation for this sin, he cannot be saved at all. For belonging to the Church is Jesus’ most strict commandment, the material condition for attaining salvation. “And if he will not hear the church,” says Jesus (Mt 18:17), “let him be to thee as the heathen and publican.” This means: whoever does not believe, despite the preaching of the priests of the Church, will be damned, says Jesus (Mk 16:16). Non-obedience to the Church is only free from sin if it is the result of an invincible and bona fide error, that is to say: if one does not know or suspect that one should join the Catholic Church. This is what the early Christian word means: “only-saving Church”.

[...]

6.38 THE CATHOLIC CHURCH BURNED AT THE STAKE THOSE OF OTHER FAITHS.

First of all, they did not simply burn “those of other faiths”, but at most the unrepentant seditionists, the conscious religious subversives. Secondly and most importantly, they were not burned by the Church. The Church herself never burned anyone at the stake or otherwise. Burning at the stake is a terrible remnant of pagan Germanic law, which, unfortunately, was adopted and maintained by almost all states in the Middle Ages; and, most importantly, it was a state punishment, not a Church punishment. It was only because the state was so closely associated with the Church, and because religious crimes were regarded by the state as state crimes, as subversion and sedition, that the state itself sometimes persecuted the perpetrators of religious crimes by brutal means, including torture and burning at the stake. In order to establish the religious crime itself, ecclesiastical elements were of course consulted, and thus the mixed tribunals were set up, such as the Inquisition. The church elements made the unfortunate mistake of often being too much the defenders of state excesses and not sufficiently opposed to cruel and often unjust methods of torture and punishment. But in most cases they did, and it was the Church that repeatedly spoke out strongly against these barbaric practices.

In any case, everyone was equally guilty at the time of the distribution of death at the stake: individuals, society,

the people, cities and states, not least the heresies themselves, which also used execution and other forms of torture against Catholics in abundance.

It is the Church that is the least blameworthy in this respect, and it is strange that the Church is the only one who is blamed by those who themselves have issues!

6.39 THE CHURCH OF ROME HAS ALWAYS BEEN A HINDRANCE OF PROGRESS.

On the contrary, for two thousand years the Catholic Church has been the initiator or stimulant of all worthwhile progress.

Who abolished slavery? Who raised the woman, the child, the worker to the dignity of a human being? Who civilized the peoples of Europe? Who taught the savage hordes swept here in the migration period to settle down, to farm, to practice trades, to live peacefully and civilly? Who sanctified the relationship between man and woman in Christian marriage and thus gave a firm and secure moral basis to the upbringing of children? It was the Catholic Church that created public education, popular education, all types of schools, from the primary schools to secondary education and universities; almost all the famous universities that still exist today were founded by the Church. The Church has created science and culture, and has made art flourish in Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and modern styles. It was the Catholic Church that created the care of the poor and the sick, established the first hospitals, poorhouses, orphanages, and provided regular care for the blind and deaf-mutes. The Catholic Church laid the foundations of social welfare, equality of men before the law, the defence of the worker's rights (Leo XIII: *Rerum novarum*, Pius XI: *Quadragesimo anno*) - There is no other institution or denomination in the world which has made such a great contribution to culture and progress as the Catholic Church. Whoever calls the Catholic Church the hindrance of progress could just as justly call the shining sun in the sky the dispenser of darkness.

6.40 THE CHURCH CONDEMNED GALILEO'S EPOCHAL DISCOVERIES.

Even if this were true and the Church had been wrong, it would be one case in a million of cultural achievements. One blunder among a million merits. But it is not the case that the Church condemned Galileo's discoveries.

It only objects to Galileo's frivolous and superfluous proclamation of his discoveries in a tone that seemingly pitted him against Scripture. Galileo's arguments about the motion of the earth were indeed unconvincing, and the true discoverer of the rotation of the earth was not himself but Copernicus, the Polish canon. That Galileo was "burned" or that he was kept in a cruel prison in Rome is as much an anti-historical fiction as that he would have said, stamping his feet before his ecclesiastical judges: "Yet the earth does move!" These are all anti-clerical fictions, freethinking fables. Galileo lived and died a deeply devout Catholic, and his best friends were priests and Jesuits. But he was undoubtedly wrong to place his astronomical opinions at odds with Scripture. This was not necessary, because the Earth's rotation around the Sun only appears to contradict Scripture. Copernicus did not do this and the Church never took any action against him. The Church did not want to defend an outdated physical view against Galileo, but the authority of Scripture.

6.41 THE CHURCH DEFENDS ITSELF AGAINST THE TRUTH BY PUTTING BOOKS IT DOES NOT LIKE ON THE INDEX.

The Church puts books on the Index which are repugnant to God, immoral or dangerous to the true faith, not because she fears the truth (she has nothing to fear in this regard!), but because she wants to protect the unsuspecting faithful from spiritual poisoning. Does not the State impose censorship in important cases? [...]

Sometimes, moreover, the Church includes the writings of Catholic priests, and even of bishops, among the prohibited works; not as if they were blasphemous or immoral, but because they had slipped into some error, or because they were written in such a style, with such arguments, and in such a grouping, that they might be dangerous in a certain age.

6.42 OWNERSHIP IS THEFT.

Property unjustly acquired is indeed theft, but property justly acquired is only theft if there is a confusion of terms.

Without property rights, men would not value anything, would not strive with true diligence to increase national

and family wealth, would not work with pleasure and love; without property rights, the lazy, the drunkard, the ignorant and careless man would have as much right to a livelihood as the industrious, the striving, the careful. Property rights therefore exist everywhere, even among primitive indigenous peoples, and even the overly socialist Soviet Russia was forced to restore property in many respects. It is the duty of the state and society only to prevent the all too easy acquisition of wealth, and especially the unscrupulous exploitation of others, and to ensure a decent living for all honest, hard-working people.

6.43 PROTESTANTISM STANDS ON THE FOUNDATION OF SCRIPTURE.

Yes: it professes to accept only what is in Scripture. This great reverence for Scripture is in itself a very beautiful and sympathetic trait in it. It is a pity that, at the same time, it is very different from Scripture on essential matters.

1. It does so mainly in its foundation: schism. According to Scripture, the Church is one and united; there must be no schisms in her (1 Cor 1:10). Jesus emphasized nothing so emphatically as the unity of his Church and the spirit of love and obedience on which this unity must be based, “that they may be one” [John 17:11], “made perfect in one” [John 17:23], [...]: these he said even at his farewell, at the Last Supper. He ordained as the legal basis of unity the authority of the Church for governing souls: He appointed Peter as the visible head of the Church, the rock foundation, to whom he gave “the keys of the kingdom of heaven”, to whom he entrusted the pastoral care of all his flock, the sheep and lambs (Mt. 16:17 and following, John 21:15-17). All this Protestantism simply pushes out of the way or tries to deprive the word of Scripture of its plain and clear meaning by forced explanations.

2. Furthermore, the Lord has entrusted the transmission and authentic interpretation of the teaching of Jesus to the living Church, to the apostles and their legitimate successors (Mk. 16:15 and following).

What we must believe, therefore, we must first of all learn from the magisterium of the living and legitimate Church. By contrast, the Protestant innovators taught, and their pastors still teach, that the only source of our faith is Scripture. By appealing to Scripture, therefore, they are taking a stand against the very ordinances of Scripture itself. Not only does Jesus nowhere say that we must believe only the Scriptures, but he says the opposite in the passages just quoted. Moreover, the very principle that we should believe only what is in Scripture is nowhere to be found in Scripture either. So it is a contradiction to proclaim that only what is in Scripture is true, because this principle itself is not in Scripture.

3. But Protestantism contradicts Scripture on a whole series of other points. To mention only one: Scripture often and most emphatically teaches that faith is not sufficient for salvation, but that good works are necessary for it; and the leaders of Protestantism constantly teach that that is not true: that faith is sufficient for salvation, and that good works are of no avail. According to Luther and Calvin, man has no free will at all, but infallibly and irredeemably does what his sinful or non-sinful inclinations lead him to do, and it is only the grace of God which nevertheless saves, but only those whom God predestines to do so without their own free agency. Scripture, on the contrary, constantly reiterates that, apart from the help of grace, it is up to man's own free will, good or bad, whether he will keep or not keep God's commandments, and on that basis he will receive eternal reward or eternal punishment according to his merit.

Likewise, the Lord Jesus teaches in the clearest words in Scripture the reality of His Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament, and Protestants simply do not accept this. According to Scripture, Jesus ordained to His apostles the power of forgiveness of sins, and Protestants deny this power in the Church. Finally, in Scripture Jesus promised the Church eternal, incorruptible survival (Mt 28:20), and the Reformers say that not only the people of the Church, but the Church itself as a doctrine and institution, became radically corrupted. These are indeed serious contradictions between the principles of schism and Scripture.

6.44 ONE ONLY HAS TO BELIEVE WHAT IS IN SCRIPTURE.

If this is true, then there is great trouble around the doctrines of the faith innovators, because, as we have explained, this much repeated doctrine itself is not in Scripture!

But neither is it in Scripture what Scripture is and what books belong to it.

Nor is it in Scripture that the so-called Reformers are to be listened to or that they are right.

Nor is it in Scripture that the Catholic Church is wrong and illegitimate.

Nor is it in Scripture that there are only 2 sacraments. Nor is it in Scripture that man has no free will to do good.

So: the main Protestant doctrines are not in the Scriptures.

6.45 THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS INTRODUCED MANY THINGS THAT ARE NOT IN THE SCRIPTURES.

Rightly so, because Christ entrusted to her the power of loosening and binding, that is, the right of legislation and spiritual government over the faithful.

But did not the innovators also bring in many things that are not in Scripture? Where is there mention of conventions, synodal decrees, Protestant churches and church consecrations, sects, ecclesiastical laws [...]? Where is there any talk of keeping Sunday instead of Saturday, of allowing children to be baptized, of Protestant confirmation, of large Protestant assemblies? The new religions have also been forced to bring in a lot of things in order to maintain order and discipline. Is it only the ancient, Christian, Catholic Church that is not allowed to do this? The one that was driven to do so not only by necessity and common sense, but also by a direct mandate from Christ?

6.46 IF ALL THIS IS TRUE, HOW CAN IT BE THAT PROTESTANTS HOLD TO THEIR DOCTRINES?

We must answer this question by discernment. There are believers of good and bad faith there. The people of bad faith know very well that they are wrong, but either out of pride, arrogance, or some strange stubbornness [...] they refuse any warning, however well-meaning. And the well-meaning never even hear the enlightenment offered by the Catholic Church, because their leaders shut them out from the enlightenment, or can fill their adherents with such aversion and prejudice against all that is Catholic that most of them never listen to or understand the arguments of Catholic truth.

Many converted Protestants have confessed that their upbringing and environment have kept them from even knowing Catholic truth for decades. [...] On the Catholic side, clear and convincing refutations of Protestant doctrines were given in the very first decades, especially by the great Roman cardinal and theologian St. Bellarmine, and in our country by Péter Pázmány, but the answer was that the Protestant leaders hurled a torrent of insults and slanders against them, and their denominational papers can hardly write, for example, the words "Pope" and "Jesuit" without throwing a tantrum. The Catholics, and especially the Jesuits, were so winning the disputes that the Protestant disputants had only one weapon left: violence, the banishment or killing of Catholic priests, and especially Jesuits. [...] In any case, all this was a more convenient weapon than intellectual resistance and refutation.

6.47 PROTESTANTISM ALSO HAD MANY BENEFICIAL EFFECTS.

Oh yes, no doubt, for the terrible destruction that came in its wake led the Catholic Church to execute a vigorous internal reform of itself. This was done, mainly through the Council of Trent and the action and activity of the Jesuit Order. It would have happened without the schism, but not so quickly. To this extent, indirectly, Protestantism has had many harmful consequences, but it has also had good results. However, can we rejoice at a fire because in its wake poor houses are replaced by more solid ones with tiled roofs? Can we rejoice at an epidemic because people take better precautions afterwards? The devastation of war because we guard our borders more firmly afterwards?

There is much good in Protestants, much deep faith, sincere piety, helpful love. To deny that would be an injustice. But what is truly good and beautiful in them, we also have, and they too draw from a common Catholic heritage. Yet to tear down unity, to stir up and make permanent hatreds, and to snatch hundreds of millions of people from the means of grace of the true Church is a terrible evil and misery!

6.48 THE REFORMERS OF THE 16TH CENTURY MAY HAVE BEEN WRONG IN MANY THINGS, BUT THEY WERE RIGHT IN THAT THE APPARATUS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH WAS FULL OF HUMAN INVENTION. REFORMATION WAS INDEED NECESSARY.

This is a perfectly true statement in both parts. The Catholic Church of that time needed reform, not in her doctrines, her constitution, her rites, but in the morals of her people, in the conduct of the curia, the prelates, the monastic orders, and the laity. But the desired reform could have been accomplished by legal means, without subversion, and especially

without blowing up the ordinances of Christ, the constitution of the Church instituted by Christ. The tragic mistake of the innovators was to throw out the baby with the bathwater: in attacking the abuses, they were attacking the Christian doctrine and the Church constitution itself. This terrible error has since been recognized by many leading Protestants, but no major attempt at a radical reversal has yet been shown. It is also perfectly true that the Catholic Church's institutions, customs, laws, worship and discipline contain many human elements and ecclesiastical initiative. But is that a problem? Has not the Lord Jesus entrusted to the Church the power of the keys, that is, the legislative office, in order to exercise it? To "loose and bind"? In other words, to make laws, to establish institutions, to organize its worship, church discipline and social life?

The fact that the Church has introduced many things which are not straightforward ordinances of Christ, e.g. monastic life, celibacy, the external rites of the Sacrament of the Altar (the "Mass"), indulgences, fasting, feasts, ceremonies, marriage impediments and the like, would only be a mistake if in these institutions the Church had opposed the ordinances of Christ, not if she had introduced them in the spirit of them and in order to enhance the spiritual life of the faithful.

The fact that something is a direct ecclesiastical ordinance does not mean that it is wrong and anti-Christian, as the Reformers constantly proclaimed. For states are constantly perfecting and extending their laws, institutions and orders, and yet they cannot be said to deny or falsify their ancient constitutions with this!

6.49 THE QUESTION OF TRUTH CANNOT BE SETTLED BY A WORD OF AUTHORITY. IT IS NOT THE WORD OF THE POPE THAT IS IMPORTANT, BUT THAT OF CONSCIENCE, "BUT PROVE ALL THINGS; HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD" (1 THESS. 5:21).

That is correct, we must examine everything; whether it conforms to the ordinances of Christ our Lord, not least to that which established the supreme governing power in the Church. In other words, we must not listen to whatever new teaching that comes up, any self-appointed church reformer or faith innovator, but we must examine whether it conforms to the rule of truth and faith which Christ and the apostles have marked out for us. That is why St. Paul says elsewhere: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema" (Gal 1:8). There is no question, therefore, of any hobbyist or even university professor in the kingdom of Christ being able to determine, from his own ideas or personal preferences, doctrines of faith which may be contrary to the authority of the Church. Is it not the word of the Pope that counts, but the word of conscience? Yes, but if conscience, which is in accordance with principles from Christ, commands us to conform to the word of the Pope, then the word of the Pope is also the word of conscience.

6.50 THE PEOPLE OF NON-CATHOLIC COUNTRIES ARE ALSO MORE EDUCATED THAN THOSE OF CATHOLIC COUNTRIES.

It would also be difficult to state this in general terms, Would Americans be more educated than the French, Belgians or Italians? And in Germany, would the Saxons and Prussians be more educated than the Bavarians or the people of the Rhineland?

But to a certain extent it can be true: among the non-Catholic states there are many that are truly exemplary in cultural institutions. But why? Because they have more money. But that does not mean anything from a worldview point of view. It's easy to have more and better schools where there is a lot of money, and harder where there is little. But are these non-Catholic countries so rich in all kinds of culture? That cannot be said. Their development, their progress, is largely external, and is chiefly due to material advancement. They have better roads, better railways, better ships, better theaters. But are their morals better? Is their faith deeper? No one in their right mind would say that about non-Catholic countries. And yet, from a Christian point of view, this is the real question, because it is the first question of spiritual formation.

SERVING GOD

7.1 IF WE BELIEVE IN JESUS, THAT IS ENOUGH FOR SALVATION. JESUS SAYS, “HE THAT BELIEVETH IN ME, ALTHOUGH HE BE DEAD, SHALL LIVE” [JOHN 11:25]

The same Jesus who said this also said, “But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” [Matthew 19:17], and also this: “Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” [Matthew 7:21]

It is clear, then, that Jesus does not regard mere, theoretical faith as a condition of salvation, but living faith, that is, faith which is manifested in the keeping of all the commandments, including, of course, the laws of the Church which He ordained and to which He gave the authority to govern the believers spiritually.

Therefore, whoever “has faith” but lives an immoral life, divorces and remarries, does not go to Mass, does not go to confession, does not receive Communion, hates and harms his neighbour, or disobeys the Church, is not saved. “So faith also, if it have not works, is dead in itself.” (James 2:17.)

7.2 ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE, GOOD WORKS ARE NOT NECESSARY FOR SALVATION.

This basic teaching of the reformers was conceived in the terrible error of not realizing that when St. Paul contrasts “works of the law” with faith as the author of salvation, by the law he means here the Torah, the Jewish laws of circumcision and other ritual laws, whose worthlessness he explains in terms of the faith and new law that Jesus brought. It is an absurd idea to conclude, with Martin Luther, that the divine and ecclesiastical laws have lost their significance and that there is no longer any need in Christianity for good works, keeping the commandments, practising charity and other virtues. This frightening doctrine must have been largely responsible for the moral upheaval, the rapid decay, of which Luther and his fellow reformers themselves later lamented. Good works are so necessary for salvation that an entire Book of the New Testament, the Epistle of St. James the Apostle, deals mainly with them. “What shall it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him?” “For even as the body without the spirit is dead; so also faith without works is dead.” (James 2:14, 26). Christ our Lord Himself says that at the last judgment the Son of Man “shall come in the glory of his Father... and then will he render to every man according to his works” (Matthew 16:27).

It would be a very comfortable gospel if it were based on the principle that good works were not necessary, and therefore this is the right instruction: “Sin boldly, but believe more boldly”.

7.3 ALL MEN ARE PREDESTINED EITHER TO SALVATION OR TO DAMNATION. WE HAVE NO FREE WILL FOR GOOD.

This is the terrible teaching of John Calvin, but we believe it is contrary to reason as well as to the justice of God. Why, then, do the Scriptures constantly proclaim that God is just if He has predestined who will receive eternal salvation and who will receive eternal damnation? If He determines beforehand who shall be saved, and gives no free will for good? He punishes us for what we could not have done otherwise! The God who has predestined us to damnation without our free will is no longer God, but a monster. Calvin’s followers also feel this and therefore want to explain away Calvin’s terrible doctrine in every possible way. One of their Hungarian leaders, for example, explains predestination in such a way that he who believes has nothing to fear, for he himself is already predestined to salvation. Yes, but the problem for other people remains in all its awfulness. The question whether God has destined us, this or that man, for salvation, is not settled by this. As soon as God has destined just one unfortunate Black person or Chinaman to eternal damnation, regardless of his free will, at that moment God is no longer God, but an unjust and cruel tyrant.

Calvin responds to this: This predestination is not injustice on God’s part, for what God does is just because God does it. But this is typical sophistry and does not resolve the issue at all. The question is precisely: can God do something that is manifestly and flagrantly unjust? To condemn a person to eternal damnation without his own individual sin which is due to his own free will is in itself and conceptually a terrible injustice that cannot be whitewashed by blaming God. Either God is just, in which case He can under no circumstances will such a predestination, or He is not just, but cruel and wicked, in which case He is no longer God.

7.4 THE SCRIPTURES THEMSELVES SPEAK OF PREDESTINATION, AS DO ST. AUGUSTINE AND ST. THOMAS.

Yes, they do, but either in the sense that God, foreseeing man's free-will action, predestines him from eternity to salvation or damnation as a deserved reward or punishment, and this is essentially different from the Calvinistic, absolute, and independent of free-will, predestination to hell; or in the sense that certain graces and invitations are predestined to him from eternity, and without any fault on man's part, e.g. being called into the true Church or to a higher sanctity etc. But there is no example or proof, either in Scripture or among church doctors, that God predestines a man to damnation independently of his merit or demerit.

7.5 EXPERIENCE ALSO SHOWS THAT MAN HAS NO FREE WILL FOR GOOD.

Experience only shows that man has a strong tendency to sin, and that mere human goodwill, without the help of grace, is not sufficient to overcome these sinful tendencies permanently. But that man has no free will at all for good, as Luther says, is by no means proved by experience. On the contrary, it is proven by experience, as Scripture itself says, that by the strengthening grace of God "do all things". (Phil. 4:13.) Otherwise, why should God command us to keep the commandments, if we are not able to keep them? And why would He threaten us with eternal punishment if we could not do otherwise than we did? For then God would demand the impossible of us, and punish us unjustly, which is incompatible with the perfection of God.

7.6 THE RITES OF THE CHURCH ARE ONLY TO THERE DAZZLE THE SIMPLE-MINDED FAITHFUL.

If this is true, the same could be said of the rites of all denominations, but also of the rites of state and social life. Why, then, the splendid coronation of a king, the solemn opening of parliament, the ornate processions of the army, the solemn forms of a wedding or funeral, and the like? It is natural that the immediate purpose of ceremonies is to make a strong impression on the senses of the spectators and participants. But why? It is always for the sake of a great and noble idea, to illustrate it. Is it not worthy, then, that, for the sake of the greatest and noblest idea, the idea of religion, and of any imperfect illustration of the greatness of God, the Church should endeavor to offer the most beautiful and sublime that can be offered, and that has been sanctified by the custom of thousands of years?

7.7 YES, BUT THE CHURCH IS ALL ABOUT CEREMONY.

Absolutely not! The ritual is always a means and a framework, the essence is always the worship of God and the asking for and transmission of grace. Even in the sacraments this is the point, although in those the external act also plays a direct role in obtaining or increasing grace.

7.8 WHY DOES THE CATHOLIC CHURCH INSIST ON LATIN IN ITS RITES?

Firstly, the mother tongue plays a far greater role in the prayer life of the Catholic Church than in that of any non-Catholic denomination anyway, because the rich prayer and devotional life of the Catholic Church, its litanies, chaplets, hymns, popular devotions, are all in the sweet mother tongue and far exceed in quantity the one hour of weekly worship that we find in non-Catholic churches.

But secondly, the Catholic Church insists on Latin as the ecclesiastical language because it wants to express its unity beyond all national and linguistic differences. It is easy to get along with the mother tongue where the people are monolingual, but where they are bilingual or multilingual, unfortunate national rivalries arise at the same time, and Holy Mother Church does not wish to include these rivalries at least in the official functions of worship. Latin is for everyone, there can be no rivalry.

Latin also expresses the unrivalled ancientry and apostolic continuity of the Church. Latin is the bridge which unites us, the children of the 20th century, in an unbroken, living continuity with the ancient Christians and their worship, with the prayers and songs of the martyred bishops and popes, priests and lay faithful of the catacombs and amphitheatres, and with one another across frontiers and oceans. What an uplifting feeling to know that this Greek Kyrie eleison, this Latin Pax vobis, was already cried and sung by the Church of the Martyrs, and is still sung by the Church in England and France, in Spain and Italy, in Constantinople and China, in Madagascar and in the churches of San Francisco! This unified, ancient Latin language is a beautiful symbolism of the eternal Christian Church, which transcends time and

space, and it would be a pity to sacrifice it when there is ample opportunity to use the vernacular, and the meaning of the Latin text is easily understood with the help of widely used Hungarian missals.

7.9 ST. PAUL SAYS THAT CHRIST HAS REDEEMED US ONCE AND FOR ALL. WHY THEN IS THERE STILL A NEED FOR SACRAMENTS?

So that the saving grace of Christ may truly come to our souls. Christ Himself ordained these means of grace, such as baptism, forgiveness of sins and the Blessed Sacrament, precisely so that we might individually receive the graces of salvation. He says of baptism, for example, that whoever does not get baptised will be damned. So, it is not enough that he has redeemed us, we also need the sacrament of baptism in order to be saved. And the same is true of the other sacraments ordained by Christ. Salvation itself was a mighty fact of the God-man, but there are certain conditions for receiving it individually, which Christ Himself laid down.

7.10 THE 7 SACRAMENTS CANNOT BE SHOWN TO BE OF CHRIST; AT MOST, THE SACRAMENTS OF BAPTISM AND THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR. MOST OF THEM ARE PURELY ECCLESIASTICAL, HUMAN INVENTIONS AND AS SUCH ARE TO BE REJECTED.

Catholicism knows 7 sacraments because Christ did indeed ordain 7 sacraments. He ordained not only the two sacraments mentioned above, but also the Sacrament of Penance (John 20:23), Anointing of the Sick (James 5:14), Ordination (Luke 22:19; I Corinthians 11:24) and matrimony, which St. Paul would not otherwise call a “great sacrament” (Ephesians 5:32). Moreover, even if the founding by Christ of one or another of these sacraments were not explicitly mentioned in Scripture, this would not prove anything, because the idea that Jesus’ actions should be accepted only if they happen to be recorded in Scripture is fundamentally mistaken; Jesus did not entrust the teaching of the faithful to Scripture, but to the living preaching of the Church (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15).

The teaching of the Church on the origin of the seven sacraments from Christ is so old and universal that even the most ancient schismatic churches, some of which separated from the body of the Church as early as the 6th century, invariably profess the seven sacraments and their origin from Christ. In contrast, it is of little importance that in the 16th century Martin Luther and John Calvin arbitrarily cut the number of sacraments. In the Church of England, this arbitrariness was already repented of, and Protestants there are increasingly returning to the doctrine of the seven sacraments.

7.11 BAPTISM OF CHILDREN IS INVALID, THE APOSTLES ONLY BAPTIZED ADULTS. AFTER ALL, A CHILD HAS NO SIN.

The whole Baptist schism is based on this misconception. First of all, a child has no personal sin, but he has the stain of original sin on his soul, that is, the absence of the supernatural grace which God pours into souls through baptism.

Secondly, how do Baptists know that the apostles only baptized adults? Scripture says nothing about this! If Scripture is the only authority, they are already on the wrong track!

Thirdly, if Christ our Lord made baptism a condition of salvation for all men (John 3:5), it would be cruel to exclude children from this sublime means of salvation, for a child can die young and then what will become of him? He will not be damned in the strict sense of the word, but without baptism he can in no case attain to the beatific vision of God. Moreover, St. Paul says of baptism that it is the circumcision of Christians (Col. 2:11); and children have also been circumcised.

7.12 CHRIST WAS BAPTIZED ONLY WHEN HE WAS AN ADULT.

What a proof! The baptism of Christ is not at all the same as the Christian baptism, for there it was only the baptism of John the Baptist, a simple sign of repentance. Besides, in Jesus’ childhood, the law of the New Testament and the sacrament of baptism in the New Testament had not been ordained at all, so it is natural that Jesus could not have availed himself of it in any form. In Jesus’ childhood, only circumcision had been ordained and Jesus had already received it in childhood.

7.13 BUT THE CHILD CANNOT YET BELIEVE, AND JESUS SAYS THAT SALVATION REQUIRES FAITH AND BAPTISM.

That is correct, the child must believe as soon as he comes to the use of his reason; but he may be baptized before that. There is no argument to the contrary.

7.14 IF BAPTISM IS SO NECESSARY TO SALVATION, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE MILLIONS OF CHILDREN WHO DIE IN INFANCY AND ARE NOT BAPTIZED?

Such children, according to the plain word of Jesus, cannot enter into the beatific vision of God. (John 3:5.) But because they have no personal sin, they cannot go to hell either. It may be supposed, then, that God will give them some natural eternal happy existence, what theologians call limbus.

7.15 WHICH CHURCH WILL THE BAPTIZED PERSON BELONG TO?

Since there is only one true Church ordained by Christ, the Catholic Church, every person who is validly baptized becomes a child of the Catholic Church and ceases to belong to it only when he consciously opposes it and declares himself a member of one of the denominations which have separated from it.

7.16 CONFIRMATION IS AN ECCLESIASTICAL INVENTION AND NOT A SACRAMENT OF GRACE.

Scripture tells us that when St. Peter and St. John the Apostles went to Samaria, they prayed for the believers they found there, who had already been baptized, "laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8:14-17). St. Paul also mentions the "imposition of hands" as one element of the teaching of Christ. (Heb. 6:2.) This means that the apostles already confirmed, and obviously on the basis of a command of Christ, because it involved the "reception of the Holy Spirit". So the objection is incorrect.

7.17 JESUS IS PRESENT IN THE EUCHARISTIC BREAD AND WINE, BUT THE BREAD AND WINE ARE NOT CHANGED, NOT "TRANSUBSTANTIATED" INTO HIS BODY AND BLOOD. THE DOCTRINE OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION, WHICH WAS INTRODUCED ONLY BY THE COUNCIL OF TRENT, IS THEREFORE FALSE.

That the doctrine of transubstantiation was introduced only by the Council of Trent is a sheer fallacy; it was invented only by the faith innovators. Jesus Himself did not say: in this bread is my body, and in this wine is my blood, but He said: this (which I hold in my hand) is my body, this is the cup of my blood. So "this", which was bread and wine before, is now my body and my blood. So it is no longer bread and wine. This is what we have called from ancient times the transformation, or since the Council of Trent, more precisely, transubstantiation, and this is how the words of Jesus were understood throughout Christian antiquity. Only the formal adoption of the word transubstantiation comes from the Council of Trent, the concept and dogma being as old as Christianity.

7.18 THERE IS NO MENTION OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION IN SCRIPTURE.

But there is, if not in the form of this theological term, but in substance, in content. There is no mention of "storm-calming" in the Bible, only that Jesus miraculously calmed the storm. Nor is there any mention of the "Trinity" in the Bible, only that God is "Father, Son and Holy Spirit". The word "Christianity" itself is never used in the gospel. Those who look not at the words but at the meaning of things cannot deny that Jesus proclaimed a transubstantiation, a transformation, when He declared that what was bread was now His body, and what was wine was now His blood.

7.19 JESUS IS PRESENT IN THE EUCHARIST, BUT ONLY AT THE MOMENT OF RECEPTION.

On what do those who preach this base their doctrine? Where did Jesus say "this is my body now, but only at the moment you receive it and then it will be simply bread again"? Those who refer so much to the Bible and do not want to accept anything that is not explicitly stated in it: they should show from Scripture where the Lord Jesus said this? According to Jesus, the bread and the wine are simply and forever changed into His holy body and blood at the word of transubstantiation, and will remain so as long as the appearances, the accompanying phenomenons of the bread and wine, which are subject to our senses, remain.

7.20 IF THE TRANSSUBSTANTIATED BREAD AND WINE WERE SUBJECTED TO PHYSICAL OR CHEMICAL EXAMINATION, IT WOULD BE FOUND TO BE NOT HUMAN FLESH AND BLOOD, BUT MERE BREAD AND WINE.

A great discovery! As if the Catholic Church didn't know that! It is only natural that the "appearances", the appearances of bread and wine should persist, with their physical and chemical properties. No one denies this. The only question is, does God Almighty have the power to replace the bread and wine with Himself, while preserving the appearances? It would be difficult to show that God is weak and incapable of doing so, that the divine omnipotence no longer extends to this. For then it would no longer be omnipotence.

7.21 NOT EVEN GOD CAN DO EVERYTHING, E.G. HE CANNOT MAKE FIVE OUT OF TWO TIMES TWO.

Something which is an intrinsic impossibility, that is, what is essentially nothing but an empty word, God of course cannot do either. But that which has no internal, conceptual contradiction, that which has a wise and great purpose and meaning: God can do it anyway.

7.22 THE HOST DOES NOT ENTER THE "HEART" OF THE COMMUNICANT, AS THE PRIESTS PREACH, BUT INTO THE STOMACH, WHERE IT DISSOLVES LIKE ANY OTHER FOOD.

If the priests preach that Jesus enters the "heart" in Communion, they are right to preach this, for, according to the Spirit and grace, Communion makes the Lord a wonderful guest of the soul and heart. Physically, however, the holy body does not, of course, go into the material heart, but into the stomach, where the sacramental presence of Jesus naturally disappears as the original appearances of the bread and wine dissolve. Where is the contradiction here? Indeed, does this not also make profound sense? Physical reception as a symbol of spiritual nourishment and communion with Christ: what a beautiful and expressive symbol! If Jesus wanted to be our food, by the reception of His holy body and blood as "real food and real drink", then this means that He wants to come to us as if He were real food. In other words, He wants to enter into a certain physical communion of life with us, the kind in which a parent lives in physical communion with his child, a vine with a branch [John 15:5]. This is just another sign and testimony of the Lord's great love for us; he does not shrink back from us and isn't disgusted by us even in this respect. Of course, the purpose of this nourishment is not the same as that of simple, earthly food, to nourish our bodies, but to make bodily nourishment a means and a symbol of spiritual nourishment and of supernatural union with us.

7.23 JESUS TELLS US THAT WHEN WE RECEIVE THE LORD'S SUPPER, WE SHOULD NOT ONLY EAT OF THE BREAD, BUT ALSO DRINK OF THE CUP. YET WHY DOES THE CHURCH KEEP THE FAITHFUL AWAY FROM THE CUP?

She did not keep away from it in the beginning and she does not keep away from it today, for example, those who are in the Eastern rite. In the Western rite there are two reasons for withholding the chalice: one dogmatic and one practical. The dogmatic reason is that under the appearance bread is not a bloodless, dry, decomposed body, but the living body of Jesus, and therefore also his blood, and vice versa: under the blood is not just some lifeless, spilled blood, but the whole Jesus. Whoever, therefore, communicates under either one or the other appearances, receives the whole Jesus; there is therefore no strict necessity that everyone should communicate under both appearances. Communion under two kinds was demanded in the West by those who denied the doctrine itself; therefore the Church did not allow it, while in the East no objection was raised to the ancient practice. In practice, however, communion under two kinds, at least where masses of people receive communion, can lead to very unpleasant consequences. Just think of the risk of dripping, contamination and the disgust that the use of a common cup inevitably brings! Since, therefore, communion under two kinds is not really necessary to the essence of the matter, and since, on the other hand, it involves many dangers of irreverence, the Church, on the basis of her authority from Christ, has ordered that only priests should communicate under two kinds, and only in the Mass, and that the faithful in the Western Church should receive Christ only under the appearance of bread.

7.24 BUT JESUS SAID OF THE CUP, DRINK YE ALL OF THIS! [MATTHEW 26:27] SO NOT ONLY THE PRIESTS.

Only Jesus addressed this saying to the apostles, not to the faithful. From this, therefore, we cannot deduce the universal command to use the cup.

7.25 IS THIS NOT AN OBVIOUS CHANGE OF JESUS' COMMAND?

No, it is at most a certain formal restriction, which the Church has the right to make. The practice of reception under both kinds is, therefore, maintained in the Church, just as Christ introduced it; for, when our Lord Christ ordained the Blessed Sacrament, it is probable that Jesus Himself only gave communion under both kinds only to priests. As to the manner in which the lay faithful were to receive Holy Communion, Jesus did not order anything in particular, but left that to the Church.

[...]

7.26 IT IS LIKE INVITING SOMEONE FOR A VISIT AND THEN AFTER THE FIRST COURSE, ASK HIM TO LEAVE SO THAT ONLY THE PRIESTS CAN PARTAKE OF THE REST.

This is a completely false explanation. For he who receives the Lord Jesus under the appearance of bread, receives exactly the same as he who drinks from the cup. It is only formally that the priests have an advantage in this respect, which is, as stated above, a perfectly normal thing. The illustration is therefore false and the comparison is biased.

7.27 IS HE WHO COMMUNICATES UNWORTHILY ALSO FED SPIRITUALLY BY CHRIST?

He who receives the holy body unworthily, that is, in a state of grave sin, without the state of grace and without the festive robe of love, also physically receives the Lord as much as anyone else, but not spiritually, because the obstacle is there in the sinner's soul, and so the sacrifice does not produce its own effects of grace in him. This is the unworthy sacrifice, of which the Apostle Paul says that it only increases the condemnation of the soul: such a man "eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord" (I Cor. 11:29).

7.28 IN THE APOSTLES' CREED OR NICENE CREED, THERE IS NO MENTION OF THE EUCHARIST.

This is perfectly understandable for two reasons. First, because in the oldest confessions of faith mentioned there are very few Christian truths at all, so to speak only those which relate to the doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation, against the heresies of the time. No one then attacked the Eucharist, and so, like a thousand other things, it is not specifically mentioned in the Creed. Secondly, the doctrine of the Eucharist was shrouded in the "discipline of the secret" by the Christians of old, that is, it was not mentioned at all to the outsiders, the pagans who mocked and misinterpreted everything; and the creeds contained precisely the elements of the outward profession of faith.

7.29 IS THERE ANY EVIDENCE THAT THE FIRST CHRISTIANS WERE ALREADY CELEBRATING MASS AND RECEIVING COMMUNION?

But how much so! Already St Paul, in 1 Corinthians 11:20-34, gives undeniable proof that the Eucharistic act, that is to say, the Mass and Communion, was the essential act of Christian worship, even though it was not then called that, but called Eucharist.

This is also attested to in the ancient Christian document Didache, written towards the end of the first century, which already refers to the Eucharist as a "sacrificial act". In the middle of the second century, St Justin Martyr, in his apologetic writing, gives an account of the worship of Christians, and although he, too, speaks of the Eucharist only in a vague way due to the pagans, he unmistakably indicates that the Eucharist and the partaking of it is at the heart of Christian worship. The whole of Christian antiquity is full of clear traces and evidence of the Eucharist and Communion. St Augustine invites his fellow priests to pray at the altar for his dead mother, and expounds the whole theology of the sacrificial nature of the Mass.

7.30 LUTHER AND CALVIN REJECTED THE MASS ON THE GROUNDS THAT JESUS, BY HIS SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS, HAD REDEEMED MANKIND ONCE AND FOR ALL AND THAT THERE WAS NO NEED FOR EVER MORE SACRIFICES.

Indeed: new sacrifices are not necessary. But the mysterious renewal and presentation of the one sacrifice on Calvary is necessary. The Mass is not a new sacrifice, not independent of the sacrifice of Calvary, but identical with it, ordered by the Lord precisely so that it might be an eternal, living memorial of his sacrifice. "Do this for a commemoration of me." [Luke]

7.31 IF THE MASS IS NOT A NEW SACRIFICE, THERE IS NO NEED FOR IT.

Yes there is, because Jesus Himself commanded that what He did we do in memory of Him. He wanted His sacrificial act to be in a certain sense constantly before God and the faithful, by which He Himself would constantly plead for us and directly shower on us the fruits of His redeeming sacrifice.

7.32 HOW CAN WE PROVE THAT JESUS REALLY WANTED THE MASS?

From the fact that He Himself first made a sacrifice by the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, when He gave His holy body and blood to His disciples under distinct kinds and using separate words, that is to say, separated from one another, and said of His body, “This is my body, which is given for you” [Luke 20:19], and of his blood, “which shall be shed for you” [Luke 22:20]. The commentators of the Scriptures prove on the basis of linguistics that these words are to be understood in the present tense, as the Greek text also indicates a simultaneity, that is to say, they don’t mean “this is the body which will be broken on the cross tomorrow”, but that it is broken here, now, in the form of a sacrifice. There, in the Cenacle, Jesus gave His body there broken and His blood shed in the chalice, to His disciples, which is obviously the expression of the first sacrifice, of death. This is also the text of Luke, which reads: “This is the chalice, the new testament in my blood, which shall be shed for you.” (22:20). According to the original Greek text, the “shed” here does not refer directly to the blood, but to the cup, or more precisely, to the blood in the cup. The chalice, however, was not used at all at the crucifixion, so the “shedding” is also done here, at the Last Supper, where the holy Blood shed is in the chalice. In other words: the Last Supper event was indeed a sacrificial act and so is the Mass as a renewal of it in accordance with the ordinance of Christ.

The Mass is nothing other than the fulfillment of Jesus’ ordinance in perfect obedience: the transformation of the bread and wine into the real, broken body of Jesus and the real, shed blood of Jesus, that is, into the sacrificial presence of Jesus.

7.33 HOW DO I KNOW THAT JESUS DID NOT ONLY MEAN THE APOSTLES, BUT THAT HE ALSO APPLIED THIS PROVISION AND AUTHORITY TO THE PRIESTS OF TODAY?

It is because Jesus ordained a priesthood in general (the apostolic office is also a priestly office) and endowed it with all the necessary authority for the salvation of souls and the leadership of the Church. And since Jesus came to redeem and invite into His kingdom not only the humanity of His own time, but also all humanity that would follow Him, He clearly intended His Church, and in it the distinctive and essential priestly powers, to be eternal. He Himself expressly speaks of His kingdom, that is, His Church, as enduring to the “consummation of the world” [Matthew 28:20]. In the form, of course, in the constitution, with the essential arrangements and institutions which He has ordained as its foundation.

7.34 THERE IS NO SUCH PERPETUAL SACRIFICE IN THE BIBLE.

But there is! As we have already explained, the Gospels and St Paul’s letter to the Corinthians speak in this sense. But this eternal Eucharistic sacrifice is already mentioned in the prophecies. In the prophet Malachias we read that the Lord God severely rebukes the Jews of that time for their sacrificial acts, which were often only done outwardly, and with a defiled spirit. I have no need of such sacrifice, the Lord continues, I will provide a better sacrifice. He then continues with these wonderful words, “For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation” (1:11). Note: in the Hebrew, the word for “sacrifice” here is replaced by a term by which the Jews meant only a bread-like meal offering. In other words, God Himself declares that instead of the Jewish sacrifices He will ordain a perfect and pure food offering, and that He will do so for the whole world. It is certain that these words, which were of great importance, and at that time still a complete mystery to the Jews, could only refer to the sacrifice of the altar, and were only perfectly fulfilled in that sacrifice: that one and pure meal offering which was to be presented to the Lord everywhere from the east to the west, so that His name might be glorified among the nations.

7.35 CONFESSION WAS NOT ORDERED BY JESUS.

The sacrament of penance was indeed ordered by Jesus, quite clearly (John 20:23), and from this it clearly follows that Holy Mother Church has the right to demand an exact confession of sins, for otherwise it would be impossible, according to Jesus' order, to decide wisely and justly whether in this or that case the priest, as representative of the Church, should "forgive" or "retain" [John 20:23] sins. If there is no confession, how does the priest know what to forgive and what to retain? Should he hand out forgiveness without thinking? Should he forgive the unworthy who will not reform and retain the sins of a repentant? And how else can the priest be sure that the sinner is truly repentant, that he has truly repented, and that he is willing to repent?

7.36 CONFESSION WAS INTRODUCED BY THE FOURTH LATERAN COUNCIL IN 1215.

The Lateran Council only established the law that every Catholic must confess and receive communion at least once a year. But confession itself (and communion) was not introduced by the Council, because it had been around since the very beginning of Christianity. The heresies of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, such as Montanism and Novatianism, accused the Church of forgiving sins too easily. St. John Chrysostom speaks of a striking case of a priest who heard confessions and who abused the confessional, and this happened in the 4th century. Frequent confession was already practised by the monks of Saint Benedict (d. 547). So it is not true that confession was introduced only in the 13th century.

7.37 I CONFESS ONLY TO GOD.

You want to determine, guilty man, what is enough for forgiveness? Is it not determined by God, the one whom you have wronged? Since when is it customary for the sinner to determine how he shall make restitution for his sin? He who is a sinner and desires forgiveness, let him not seek to set the conditions of grace himself, but let him seek to know what conditions God has made for forgiveness of sins!

If our Lord Christ entrusted to the priesthood the dispensation of forgiveness of sins, or the retention of sins in heaven (John 20:23), then it is not enough to confess only "to God"! You can confess, but God does not give absolution, because He has entrusted it to the Church.

7.38 THE PRIEST IS ALSO A SINNER, HOW CAN HE BE THE JUDGE OF CONSCIENCES?

As a sinful man, the priest himself is obliged to go to confession. As a pastor, however, he does not judge on the basis of his own innocence or holiness of life, but as Christ's anointed and delegated representative.

7.39 CONFESSION IS A TEMPTATION TO RECKLESS SINNING. "I'M GOING TO CONFESS IT ANYWAY," MANY PEOPLE SAY, AND THEN THEY SIN JUST AS MUCH AS BEFORE.

He who does and feels so confesses invalidly. For confession is not the only important condition for the forgiveness of sins, but rather deep and sincere repentance and a serious and resolute firm purpose of amendment. If some people confess without a serious and firm purpose of amendment, they are deceiving themselves, but it is not possible to judge the value of the institution of confession in this way. In reality, it is sincere confession and contrition that are the most remarkable means of avoiding sin and improving our lives. People do not become more frivolous through true confession, but on the contrary, they become more serious, better, more moral, more heroic.

7.40 THE CHURCH USED TO HAND OUT FORGIVENESS FOR MONEY.

This fairy tale is also the worst kind of controversialist literature and fabrication of religious hatred. The Church has never promised nor given forgiveness for money. It has sometimes made the obtaining of indulgences conditional on a certain charitable donation, and this, we may allow, was so clumsily and perversely proclaimed by certain overzealous monks in Luther's day, as if the charitable donation itself were the price of obtaining indulgences. However, the Church never taught this and immediately intervened against abuses of indulgences. Moreover, indulgences are not themselves "forgiveness of sins", but only the remission of certain temporary punishments by virtue of the Church's power to loose and bind.

7.41 THERE IS NO MENTION OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK IN SCRIPTURE.

There is! Let us look at the letter of St. James the Apostle, which says: "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" etc. [James 5:14] Why then should the sick be anointed with oil according to the Apostle, if not by divine ordinance, and because oil is in this case an external sign and instrument of divine effects? The expression "in the name of the Lord" is also, according to the Judaeo-Aramaic usage, "according to the commandment, the ordinance of the Lord". This is why the apostle James attributes divine effects to this anointing ("and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him") [James 5:15]. In other words, according to St. James, the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick was not ordained by the Church, but by Christ himself. This is also the way the faith of the Church has always held.

7.42 WHEN DID JESUS ESTABLISH THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS?

Immediately at the Last Supper, when He instituted the Sacrament of the Altar, and immediately ordered that the same thing, the presentation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, "[d]o this for a commemoration of me" [Luke 22:19]. By this He ordained the apostles bishops and priests. And since He ordained the Eucharist to the end of the world, according to the sentence above, according to St. Paul (1 Cor. 11:26), it is clear that he ordained the priesthood to be perpetual.

In addition to the Blessed Sacrament, He gave to the same apostles ordained bishops, the right to forgive sins and the spiritual direction of the faithful, likewise obviously as a perpetual institution. The ecclesiastical order is therefore an ordinance of Christ; hence we read in Scripture that the apostles themselves ordained bishops and appointed deacons.

7.43 THERE CAN BE RELIGION WITHOUT PRIESTS.

First of all, there cannot be a Christian religion without priests, because the Christian religion was founded by Jesus Christ to have priests as leaders, preachers and ministers of the sacraments. Jesus Christ undoubtedly entrusted to priests the spreading of his spiritual kingdom, the instruction and the spiritual government of the faithful, the administration of religious and moral affairs. No one can deny this. One need only glance at the Gospels to be convinced of this. This cannot be changed, even if someone shouts himself hoarse in repeating his own deceptive rhetoric. Secondly, everyday experience shows a hundred and a thousand times day after day that those who are enemies of the priests are not very good at religion anyway. It is not true, therefore, that they "want religion but do not want priests". On the contrary, they do not need God, they do not need Jesus, they do not need religion, a pure life, morality, the Ten Commandments, conscience; and they do not need priests, because priests preach it. Let us look around: who hates priests? All thieves and evildoers, all [...] adulterers, all lazy people and those who exploit others, all rabble-rousers [...]. Honest men never have a quarrel with the clergy, at least with the clergy who are zealous, [...] who live a pure life, that is to say, the very clergy who most vigorously defend and represent the principles and interests of the Church.

7.44 ST. PETER SAYS THAT WE ARE ALL MEMBERS OF THE "HOLY PRIESTHOOD". (1. PET. 2, 5.) THERE IS THEREFORE NO SENSE IN A SEPARATE ORDINATION.

It is interesting how one obscure scripture passage can be one-sidedly played off against ten of the clearest other scripture passages.

The Scriptures are full of dispositions on hierarchy and clearly distinguish between ecclesiastical prelates and ordinary believers, between ecclesiastical superiors who administer the sacraments and govern the souls, between the teaching church and the learning or hearing church.

This cannot be contrasted with St. Peter's description of the whole Church as "holy priesthood". In a certain sense and to a certain extent we are all indeed partakers of Christ's priesthood, in so far as we are all involved in his redemptive sacrifice; but we are not all partakers of the hierarchical priesthood in the strict sense, of which Christ and the apostles so often speak.

7.45 THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ONLY ALLOWS BIBLES APPROVED BY THE POPE TO BE READ.

This statement also confuses true and false. Those who are trained and qualified in theology are given permission by the Church to read any Scripture texts, even those that are obviously falsified. The Church, on the other hand, requires the faithful in general to read only those editions of Scripture which have been approved by the legitimate ecclesiastical authority and to which are appended explanatory notes taken from the Fathers and ecclesiastical scholars. In this way, the sacred text is in no way altered, but the Church is trying to avoid misinterpretations and nonsense. St. Peter himself writes of St. Paul's letters that they are in places "hard to be understood", difficult to understand, and easily misinterpreted by the ignorant (2 Pet. 3, 16). It is indeed an absurd idea that every uneducated and unauthorized person should read his own uninformed ideas into the Scriptures.

And the fact that we are only allowed to read ecclesiastically approved Scripture is very understandably explained by the fact that the Church, out of respect for the Word of God alone, cannot allow any random individual, much less conscious fraudsters and forgers, to falsify scripture at their pleasure or to "translate" it as freely as they please. [...] After all, no one can rewrite the Hungarian code of law just as he pleases; let alone the Word of God, Holy Scripture!

7.46 THE STATE, AS THE ULTIMATE SOURCE OF LAW, IS ABOVE THE CHURCH; FOR THE CHURCH HAS ONLY AS MANY RIGHTS AS IT RECEIVES FROM THE STATE.

This is a totally outdated, liberal theory of law, which is based on completely wrong foundations. At one time, the proponents of the superstition of State omnipotence and the legal positivists did indeed claim that the State was the exclusive source of all rights on earth. But this is not true. There are human rights which are deeper, more sacred and independent of the state than any state law, rights which man would have even if he lived outside the state. Thus, for example, every man has a natural, God-given, fundamental right to his own life, to preserve his human dignity, to follow his conscience and the moral law, and this right is absolutely independent of any state power. It is also directly from the Creator, and not from the State, that man derives the right to start a family, to bring children into the world and to educate them according to his own conscience. There is not only a state right, but also a divine right, of two kinds: natural and positive. Both are completely independent of state law.

The Church is as sovereign a body and as autonomous a source of law as the state. The State is sovereign in its own sphere, in the external establishment of earthly welfare and earthly legal security; the Church is sovereign in her own sphere, in matters of religion and conscience. The Church has received her rights directly from God, and in the exercise of them is not subject to any earthly power. But as the Church, by the commandment of God, teaches and obliges her faithful to respect the laws of the State, if they are not contrary to divine law, so it is the duty of the State to respect the rights of the Church, which she has received not from herself, but from Christ himself.

[...]

7.47 ONLY POPE GREGORY VII INTRODUCED CELIBACY IN THE 11TH CENTURY.

Gregory VII only renewed the ancient regulations on the subject and disciplined priests who sinned against celibacy. But he did not introduce the law of priestly celibacy, which had been in place for much longer. Already the Council of Elvira in Spain (c. 300 A.D.) had made celibacy compulsory for the clergy, and although this Council was a local council one, the law of celibacy was becoming more and more general in the West by this time, as a matter of custom. Already at the first ecumenical Council of Nicea (325) there were some who wished to extend this law to the whole Church, and indeed, as the Trullan Council (629), among others, states, even then no bishop in the East could be not celibate. Pope Leo the Great and Pope Gregory the Great (the former d. 461, the latter d. 604) had already extended the decision of the Council of Elvira to include the subdeacons. So anyone who says that the law of celibacy was introduced only by Gregory VII is showing a great deal of historical ignorance.

7.48 THE LAW OF PRIESTLY CELIBACY IS CONTRARY TO NATURE.

Contrary? A bit of an overstatement. That this law is difficult and highly supernatural in its orientation: there is no doubt. That is why its observance requires a truly serious determination, constant self-discipline and deep spirituality. But it is only those who forget that Jesus and the apostles also lived celibate lives, and that Jesus praises abstinence

voluntarily for the kingdom of God and declares it to be a higher state of perfection (Mt 19:12). Likewise, St. Paul recommends and counsels chastity as a higher perfection (1 Cor. 7). Therefore, this cannot be called unnatural on a Christian basis.

And if voluntary celibacy and complete chastity are evangelical counsels, it is worthy and fitting that especially priests should set a good example in them, all the more so because they thereby become more worthy to minister the sacred mysteries to which they are called. The celibate and chaste priest is also approached by the faithful with great trust and respect, especially in the confessional. The Church, at least in the West, wants her priests to lead such a high spiritual life, so concerned only with apostolate, that they are not at all absorbed in earthly, sensual or family concerns. This is the eternal ornament of the Church, and is praised and approved of by many Protestants of good will, and is even being imitated of late by Anglican ministers in England.

7.49 WHY, THEN, DOES THE CHURCH ALLOW EASTERN PRIESTS TO MARRY?

Because priestly celibacy is a higher degree of perfection, but not an essential condition for ordination to the priesthood. Besides, there are certain restrictions in this respect in the Eastern Church, too.

7.50 NOWHERE IN SCRIPTURE DO WE READ ABOUT THE SACRAMENTALITY OF MARRIAGE AND OF ITS BEING AN ORDINANCE OF CHRIST.

Here again, the basic premise is false: as if only what is explicitly stated in Scripture can be true and can be an ordinance of Christ. [...] Christ did not leave it to individual men, with Bibles in their hands, to judge the ordinances and statements of Christ, but to the Church to teach and guide, to govern and sanctify. If the Church teaches that marriage is a sacrament, then it is a sacrament! And then he, who pushes Holy Mother Church out of the way, goes against Christ Himself. "And if he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican." (Mt 18:17). Something may be included in the ordinances of the apostles without being explicitly stated in Scripture, such as the sanctification of Sunday instead of the Sabbath, or the baptism of children. The fact that there are seven sacraments is also among them.

Moreover, the Scriptures themselves are quite clear on the subject of marriage, when St Paul openly refers to Christian marriage as a holy mysterion, or a great sacrament. This is on the grounds that marriage is a sacred image of the mystical union of Christ and the Church and as such is the mediator of Christian graces (Eph 5:22-32). It is for this reason that the ancient church thought of marriage as a sacrament. From Tertullian, for example, we know the interesting fact that the early Christians already often tied the marriage ceremony to the sacrifice of the Mass (Ad uxor. 2, 9).

7.51 MARRIAGE IS A SIMPLE CONTRACT, LIKE A SALE. WHAT SENSE DOES IT MAKE TO CONSIDER IT A SACRAMENT?

This is what Martin Luther claimed, but he was wrong. It is not a question of a good, a house or an estate, but of a loving union between two people who are to live their lives in faithful love for each other and to bring up, by common strength and effort, the children God has given them. It is therefore above all a moral bond, involving a whole series of duties which bind in conscience. Christ our Lord elevated marriage to the dignity of a sacrament precisely so that, as a sacrament, it might be an inexhaustible source of the graces without which a religious, moral, Christian, peaceful and harmonious family life could not long be imagined.

For 1900 years, sacramental and indissoluble marriage, based on Christian morality, has indeed been the surest pillar of a healthy and virtuous family life for the nations. The Protestants themselves regarded marriage, if not as a sacrament, as a sacred and ecclesiastical matter, and it was and is still celebrated in church ceremonies.

But then came the age of the Enlightenment, the age of anti-religious freethinking, which, as in all areas, was concerned only with how to weaken the influence of religion and the Church on society. In order to detach family life from religious thought, it pushed through so-called civil marriage and divorce in most European states.

7.52 BUT ONCE THE SPOUSES NO LONGER LOVE EACH OTHER? IF THEIR LIVES ARE HELL TOGETHER! WHAT IF, AS LÁSZLÓ RAVASZ [PRESBYTERIAN BISHOP IN HUNGARY] SAID, THE SOUL DIES OUT OF MARRIAGE?

This is a one-sided reasoning! Well, let the spouses see to it that their life does not become hell and that the soul and love do not die out of the marriage sanctified by vows! Let them love each other as they have promised and sworn to love each other! What kind of Christianity is it that says that hatred must be allowed free rein? Or which dares not demand the duty of love at all costs? Which does not confess that, even if one party offends against the other, peace must be restored at all costs?

If the “spirit of honesty dies out” of me, am I free to steal and commit crimes? Is it Christian reasoning: please, it is hard for me to keep the law, it is hell for me if I cannot steal, rob, commit fornication? Do not evildoers speak thus? What excuse is this? Get your act together, think of God, be loving and patient, be able to give in and to forgive, and then the greatest differences can be smoothed out!

However, the fact is that it is often difficult to remain faithful in marriage and many marriages become “hell” because divorce is allowed! Because the spouses know that all they have to do is get into a big fight and then one is free to go! Because this is itself a constant temptation to infidelity and quarrelling! Where there is no divorce (as there was no divorce in the time of our forefathers for 1900 years, or in Italy even today!), people do not quarrel so much, or if they quarrel, they make peace, because they know that they cannot divorce and marry someone else! But where the way is opened to evil, as here, people are much more easily led into evil than where it is forbidden by divine and human law alike, and social stigma follows those who break the law!

7.53 JESUS HIMSELF ALLOWS DIVORCE “FOR FORNICATION” (MT 19:9).

Yes, separation is permitted by Jesus, and by the Catholic Church in such cases. But not remarriage! It is not the same thing! A new marriage during the life of the spouse is most explicitly called by Jesus fornication, without exception (Mt 19:6 and following; Mk 10:11 and following). Likewise, St. Paul repeatedly states that a second marriage during the life of a husband or wife is simply adultery and that only in the case of the death of the lawful spouse is a new marriage not adultery (Rom 7:2; 1 Cor 7:10 and following).

7.54 I CAN BE RELIGIOUS EVEN IF I’M NOT MARRIED IN CHURCH.

Yes, you can, but then there is a constant conflict between your religiosity and your actions. You may be religious in that you pray and go to Mass, but you are not religious in what ought to be even beyond that, keeping the severely binding laws of God and his Church. Without this, your religiousness is of little avail, and will not save you from the peril of eternal damnation. “Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Mt 7:21).

7.55 MANY PEOPLE TODAY ARE LIVING IN CIVIL MARRIAGES AND ARE NOT BAD CHRISTIANS.

Yes, they are bad Christians if they knowingly defy the commandments of God and the laws of His Church! The fact that many people are on the road to damnation is nothing new; the Lord Jesus Himself said so. This is why He said: “Strive to enter by the narrow gate; for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able.” (Lk 13:24). Whoever follows the crowd, will be lost together with the crowd.

7.56 WHAT BUSINESS IS OF THE CHURCH OR THE STATE WHOM I LOVE AND WITH WHOM I LIVE?

The State does have something to do with it, because it is obliged to protect public morality and because such cohabitation often has civil consequences. But the Church has even more to do with marriage, because it is not a neutral thing with regards to conscience, as indifferent as putting on or taking off a coat, but by its very nature it is bound up with serious considerations of conscience and moral consequences; and as soon as a matter is a matter of conscience, it is a matter for the Church.

7.57 THE CHURCH FORBIDS BIRTH CONTROL, ALTHOUGH IN MANY CASES IT IS DIRECTLY REQUIRED BY CIRCUMSTANCES.

It is not the Church, but divine law itself which forbids the abuse of conjugal rights. For this reason, and because the Church is better able to instill in her faithful a love of children, one child or zero children are more prevalent among non-Catholics than among Catholics, at least among Catholics who live a life of faith. However, neither God nor the Church forbids birth control based on permanent or intermittent abstinence, which, according to recent scientific findings (Knaus-Ogino theory), seems to be a natural and therefore permissible method of birth control. Moreover, the means of religious grace also equip man for the heavy sacrifices of total abstinence.

7.58 CATHOLICS WORSHIP MARY AS WELL AS GOD.

This is repeated stubbornly in many Protestant theology textbooks; nevertheless, it is nothing but a complete and utter misunderstanding. In the sense of worship, that is, to honour as God, Catholics also worship and adore only the one true God. Simple reverence on religious grounds is one thing, and worship is another. This conceptual difference is present in all languages (*adorare* - *venerari*, *anbeten* - *verehren*, *adorer* - *vénérer*). The fact that in some places, for four hundred years, people have been refusing to acknowledge this striking difference has its own psychological reasons. It is not our fault.

7.59 BUT YES, CATHOLICS KNEEL BEFORE THE IMAGE OF THE VIRGIN MARY AND PRAY TO HER.

Neither kneeling nor praying is worship in itself. Worship is as much as acknowledging as God and honoring as God. When we Catholics kneel down before the image of Mary, we do so because we have a profound reverence for the Virgin Mary, and kneeling is a worthy and permissible expression of this reverence. If the Protestants say that only what is in Scripture is true, let them show for once where Scripture forbids the expression of non-adoring veneration by kneeling? Praying to the Virgin Mary is simply supplication and invocation. Where in Scripture does it say that it is forbidden to invoke and ask for her help the Mother of God? Besides, half of the Hail Mary itself is no more than a repetition of the greeting which God himself addressed to the Virgin Mary through the angel and which Elizabeth addressed to the Blessed Virgin. If it were a sin to address the Virgin Mary in this way, “Hail, full of grace”, then the Lord God Himself would have been the first to commit this sin!

The first half of the Hail Mary is explicitly written in Scripture.

7.60 MARY WAS NOT THE “MOTHER OF GOD” AT ALL, BUT ONLY THE MOTHER OF THE MAN JESUS.

Naturally, God as such could not have a mother. But since Jesus was both God and man in one person, it is perfectly correct to call the Virgin Mary “Mother of God”. For although she was not the mother of God as such, she was the mother of Jesus who was also God. We are also right to call the Pope’s mother the Pope’s mother, even though the Pope was not born as the Pope, but as a little child.

7.61 THE DOCTRINE OF MARY’S VIRGINITY IS NOT FOUND IN SCRIPTURE.

But how much it is! Not to mention that Isaiah already prophesied (7:14) the supernatural and extraordinary birth of the Messiah when he wrote: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel”. St Luke himself says at the beginning of his Gospel: “the angel Gabriel was sent from God... [t]o a virgin...” The angel informs Mary that she has been chosen by God to be the mother of the Messiah, and Mary, in spite of the great honour, asks in fear: “How shall this be done, because I know not man?” The angel reassures her that it is not by the intervention of a man, but by the power of the Most High that she will bring her son into the world. Only then does Mary say the word “be it done”.

7.62 ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL, JESUS HAD BROTHERS AND SISTERS, SO MARY CANNOT BE CALLED A VIRGIN AFTER ALL.

The word “brother” in Eastern languages and in Scripture very often means cousin or relative in general. Although Matthew (13:55) refers to James and Joseph, Simon and Judas as “his brethren” and also speaks of “his sisters” (13:55

and following), but he himself mentions another Mary under the cross, “the mother of James and Joseph” (27:56), who, according to St. John the Evangelist, was not the Virgin Mary, but the wife of Cleophas (in Greek, Alphaeus) and a relative of the Virgin Mary. They were therefore relatives of Jesus, but in no way the real brothers and sisters of Jesus, as the Bible itself testifies. Moreover, if Jesus had real brothers and sisters, it would be incomprehensible that Jesus, dying on the cross, should have offered his mother to the care of John the stranger, rather than to one of his brothers.

7.63 JESUS HIMSELF CONTRADICTS THE VENERATION OF MARY, FOR AT THE WEDDING IN CANA HE REJECTS MARY WITH THE WORDS, “WOMAN, WHAT IS THAT TO ME AND TO THEE?” (JOHN 2:4).

Few objections show the bias of some anti-Catholic polemicists as convincingly as this one. Do they really want to infer from these words of Jesus that Jesus denied His mother in the first place, and rejected her like some naughty and disobedient child? But in reality this is not the case. The meaning of the words quoted is certainly not “what do I have to do with you”, but “in what way does it concern us whether there is enough wine for the wedding guests or not”? The miracle at Cana, moreover, proves that Jesus did indeed heed the intervention of the Virgin Mary, for at her request He performed a miracle and turned water into wine. The marriage at Cana, therefore, is not an argument against the justification of the veneration of Mary, on the contrary, it is an argument in favor of it.

7.64 THE BODILY ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN MARY INTO HEAVEN IS NOT FOUND IN SCRIPTURE.

Neither is it in Scripture that the body of the Virgin Mary remained in the tomb. However, the earliest Church tradition has always held that God assumed the Virgin Mary, body and soul, into heaven after her death. From the very beginning, the early Christians had great respect for the tombs of Saints Peter and Paul and the other saints, but no church community ever claimed that the body of the Blessed Virgin was buried here or there. Moreover, it is a worthy hypothesis that God did not abandon the body of the Virgin Mother of the God-Man to the fate of decay, not only because of the close maternal relationship with the God-Man, but also because death and decay are a direct consequence of the original sin from which the Virgin Mary was preserved from the beginning by the grace of the Immaculate Conception.

7.65 THE MARIAN SHRINES ARE A HOTBED OF SUPERSTITION; THUS, IT HAS LONG BEEN ESTABLISHED THAT THE ALLEGED MIRACLES AT LOURDES ARE THE RESULT OF MERE SUGGESTION AND HALLUCINATION.

The opposite is the conclusion of all unbiased researchers, including the more than 10,000 doctors who have so far testified with their signature proving that the cures they have examined in Lourdes cannot be explained on any medical basis. Indeed, hundreds of people have been cured at Lourdes whose illnesses are not at all due to neurological influences, especially hallucinations and suggestion. Cancer, tuberculosis in an advanced stage, huge wounds, bruises, broken bones and the like cannot be cured by suggestion.

If one wants to know more about this, one should read the book Lourdes by the French professor Bertrin. The infidel and frivolous novelist himself, Emil Zola, when visiting Lourdes, stated before witnesses that the findings of the medical review office there were undoubtedly true with regards to the miracles; but he later denied this statement and in his novel Lourdes tried to explain the miraculous cures by openly falsifying the facts. When the people who were healed and appeared as characters in his novel challenged him in a letter, he said that he was writing a novel, not a story, and that he would do what he liked with the characters in his novels. Despite this, the former leader of the German atheists, Ernst Haeckel, refers to Zola's novel as a historical source work, and the unbelieving world would rather believe this fraudster than the written, solemn declarations of 10 000 serious doctors.

As an aside, the Church, has not yet made an official statement on the question of the miracles of Lourdes, but there is every reason to believe that in these miraculous events, too, Jesus' promise is fulfilled (Mk. 16:17) that the gift of miracles in His Church will never cease.

7.66 THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, LIKE THE GREEK [ORTHODOX], CARVES CRUCIFIXES AND HOLY STATUES AND HANGS IMAGES IN HER CHURCHES.

The law of God does not say not to make a graven image, but: not to make a graven image for the purpose of worshipping it. This is a typical example of the arbitrary and mutilated interpretation of Scripture that is otherwise a

constant phenomenon in anti-Catholic debates. They take a scriptural quotation out of context, omit the circumstances necessary for a correct interpretation, or other clearer scriptural passages that contradict their thesis - and their argument is complete. Thus indeed everything can be “proven” from Scripture.

The difference between idolatry and Christian veneration of images is that the idolater worships the statue or the idol, i.e., he regards it as a god and endows it with divine powers; the Catholic Christian, on the other hand, does not worship the images, statues, or crucifixes, and does not regard them as divine beings, but only reveres them as a sign of God and His saints. When we kneel before the crucifix, it is not the tree or the stone that we venerate, but the One whom the crucifix represents: Jesus Christ. Every child in our country knows this, and the Protestants know it too, but their clever, over-zealous people are always stirring up this bad-faith fairy-tale.

By the way, we find crosses, statues and holy images in Lutheran churches: how is it, then, that the Calvinists never thunder against this, but are only scandalized if Catholics do it? It is a clear sign, then, that it is not reason or religious fervor that speaks here, but passion and hatred.

Is it idolatry to display a picture of one's dead mother in one's room, or a picture of the head of state in one's office, as a sign of respect?

7.67 THE CATHOLIC PEOPLE HAVE A CULT OF HOLY IMAGES THAT IS SUPERSTITION.

It is possible that a Catholic believer goes too far in his veneration of the saints, and among the images and statues he hardly notices the most important and most important: God, the Lord Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. But this is the mistake of some people, and it would be a pity to deprive our churches and our religious life of those holy signs which are so lovely and inspiring to devotion, and often so artistically excellent, whose very purpose is to make us, following the inspiring example of the saints, think more and more of God and love and adore him more and more.

7.68 DOES THE CHURCH THEREFORE BELIEVE THAT THE VENERATION OF THE SAINTS IS ALSO VENERATION OF GOD?

[...] We honor and love the saints not primarily because they were virtuous and excellent men – although they deserve respect for that too – but mainly because they loved and served God with wonderful devotion, and therefore we can approach God with greater confidence in their company. In the saints, we Catholics also ultimately honor and love God.

7.69 I DON'T NEED SAINTS TO STEP IN FRONT OF GOD.

True, you can come before God alone. In fact, even if you ask for the help of the saints, it is important that you yourself should come before God with all your soul. But you cannot object if a man prefers to come before the king, having first asked the king's mother and his intimate servants to say a good word on his behalf.

7.70 GOD ALREADY KNOWS WHAT I WOULD ASK OF HIM; IT IS USELESS THAT THE SAINTS SHOULD THEN FIRST TELL HIM WHAT I WANT.

I don't ask for the help of heavenly patrons to “tell” God what he already knows, but that they may pray for me, because that way I can have greater hope that God will be more willing to hear my prayer in response to their pleas.

7.71 SO IS THERE PROTECTIONISM IN HEAVEN?

If by protection we mean merit support based on brotherhood or camaraderie, of course there is no such thing in God. But if we take the word “protection” in its original sense (“protegere” = to protect), yes, we do well to seek the protection of God's friends.

7.72 THE VENERATION OF RELICS IS ALSO A SUPERSTITION.

Is it? Then why do we open Petőfi rooms, János Arany rooms, Goethe rooms? And why do we guard with piety, for example, Lehel's horn or other historical relics? Or perhaps we Catholics worship the relics of the saints? This is such a vulgar and childish notion that shame falls on those who dare to come up with such nonsense even today. We

venerate relics, but only in so far as they were related to holy persons: that is to say, we venerate the people to whom they relate. If I keep a lock of my mother's hair, or a piece of my father's favorite furniture, why should I not guard with piety a relic of this or that martyr or other saint, or even a fragment of the sacred cross on which Christ redeemed the world and which was watered by His holy blood?

7.73 THERE ARE A LOT OF FAKE RELICS IN CIRCULATION.

Unfortunately, this is true, because at one time, especially during the Crusades, many unscrupulous and conscienceless people circulated fake relics to make a living. In order to prevent such abuse, the Church decreed some time ago that relics may only be accepted as such after due examination and with the documented testimony of the competent diocesan bishop. Besides, even if someone were to venerate a false relic, that would not be so bad, because the true object of veneration is not the material object that is considered a relic, but the holy person whom we wish to venerate through the relic, and ultimately God Himself, whom we venerate in the saints.

7.74 HOW IS HOLY WATER DIFFERENT FROM ORDINARY WATER?

Physically and chemically, of course, the two of them are no different. But it differs in that one is associated with the prayer of Holy Mother Church, the other is not. When I use holy water (which is not a sacrament, but only a sacramental), I am actually asking for the blessing of the praying Church, because the Church prays at the time of the consecration of water that whoever uses it with a believing spirit may be blessed by the good God.

7.75 IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR A FEW DROPS OF WATER TO BE A CONDITION OF GOD'S BLESSING.

It is not the water as such, but the prayer of the Church, which is attached to it as a visible sign. Why not? It is just like a bank note or a ticket to the theater. Here too, some wise person might say: it is impossible that a piece of worthless, dead paper should give me the right to buy something, to attend a great theater performance or a concert! The piece of paper as such does not give me a right, of course, but as a ticket it can be a means and a condition of the right attached to it.

7.76 ULTIMATELY, THE CHURCH CONSIDERS ETERNAL LIFE TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING. WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS NOT WHAT IS BEYOND THE GRAVE, BUT WHAT IS HERE ON EARTH!

This is an incredibly narrow-minded and biased speech! Of course it is also important what is here on earth; no one doubts that. But if we compare the two: what is greater, what is more important, what is more vital, there can be no doubt that the infinite is far more than the finite, the eternal is a million times more and is more important than the transience of minutes or years. Whoever forgets this is like the senseless child who values a shiny copper coin more than a crumpled document about a fortune worth millions.

Eternity! Do you know, man, what it is? Do you know what it means: to live forever, in overflowing happiness or in unspeakable unhappiness? Do you know how much more eternity is than not just a lifetime, not just a thousand or a million or ten billion years, but any amount of time imaginable or conceivable? To exist in such a way that we never cease to exist, our existence never finishes, never ends, never turns into non-existence? To enjoy the blessed treasures of the kingdom of God, its love and light, its abundance of beauty and sweetness, its knowledge and appreciation, the fulfillment of all our desires forever and ever and ever? Or to wallow in agony, despairing, moaning, screaming in pain, gnashing our teeth in the flaming prison for eternity? Year after year, millennium after millennium, billion after billion and beyond... For all time, for all time to come... As long as God remains God and the laws of existence remain.

Do you know, man, what this is? Dare you deny it? You can deny it, only then you'll be confronted by the One who knows a hundred times better than you do: God Himself. Jesus Christ. You can't deny that Jesus, the Word of God, preached the doctrine of eternal life and eternal punishment, in the most solemn and unmistakable way. In the face of such a possibility, such a certainty, simply to play dumb, to look away from it, to close your eyes: oh, yes, you can do that, for man is capable of all kinds of madness; but you cannot do it soberly, rationally, without terrible harm to yourself!

And that is why you cannot say such nonsense as that life on earth is more important than eternity!

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